



**THE NOTARY'S NOSE,  
AND OTHER STORIES.**



*POPULAR FRENCH NOVELS.*

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AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY EDMOND ABOUT

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## THE NOTARY'S NOSE.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE EAST AND WEST AT VARIANCE—BLOOD FLOWS.

MAITRE ALFRED L'AMBERT, before the fatal blow was given which obliged him to change his nose, was certainly the most brilliant notary in France. At the time I speak of, he was thirty-two years of age, with a tall commanding figure, large well-shaped eyes, an Olympian brow, and hair and beard of the most pleasing blond hue. His nose—the first one I mean—was high and curved, like the beak of an eagle. You may believe me or not, when I tell you that his white cravat suited him to perfection. Whether this was because he had worn one from his earliest youth, or that he supplied himself from the very best emporium, I am not prepared to say—perhaps it was for both of these reasons.

It is one thing to knot round your neck a handkerchief twisted like a cord, and another to tie with art a bow of white muslin with ends of equal length sufficiently starched to point symmetrically to the right and left. A white cravat well chosen and well tied is a becoming thing, as every lady will tell you; but it is not sufficient to know how to tie it, you must also know how to wear it; this is an affair of experience. Why does a white cravat set so ill upon a me-

chanic on his wedding day? simply because he wears it then for the first time without any preliminary study.

One may accustom one's self in a very short time to wear the most extravagant head-dress—a crown for instance. Buonaparte, the soldier, picked one up—one that a king of France had let fall on the Place Louis XV. He put it on his head, without a lesson from any one, and all Europe agreed in thinking it by no means unbecoming. Indeed, he even made crowns the fashion in his own family, and among his intimate friends; every one about him wore one, or longed to do so!

But this extraordinary man was but an indifferent hand at wearing a white cravat gracefully. The Vicomte de C—, author of several poems, had studied diplomacy and the art of wearing his cravat with success. He was present at the review of the French army in 1815, a few days before the battle of Waterloo, and what do you suppose struck him most at this heroic gala, where the despairing enthusiasm of a great nation broke forth—it was that Buonaparte's cravat did not set well!

Few men in this pacific domain could compete with Maître Alfred L'Ambert. I write L'Ambert and not Lambert—there is a decision of the Council of State on that question. Maître L'Ambert had succeeded his father, and practised as a notary by birthright. For more than two centuries this celebrated family had transmitted from father to son the office in the Rue de Verneuil, and with it the most distinguished clients of the Faubourg St. Germain.

There was no means of ascertaining what the practice was worth, for it had always gone with the name, and within the last five or six years had never been worth less than three thousand four hundred pounds a year on an average. For two centuries and more, the elders of this family had always worn the notarial badge, a white cravat, as naturally as the

raven wears his black plumage, the drunkard his red nose, or the poet his thread-bare coat. Legitimate heir to a well-known name, and a considerable fortune, young Alfred d'Ambert had imbibed sound principles with his mother's milk. He duly despised all the political innovations which had been introduced into France since the catastrophe of 1789. In his eyes the French nation was composed of three classes only, the clergy, the nobility, and the commonality, a highly respectable opinion which is still entertained by a small number of senators at the present day. He modestly ranked himself amongst the foremost of the commonality, not without inwardly cherishing some secret pretensions to the nobility conferred by the judicial robe. He held in sovereign contempt the mass of the French nation—that assemblage of peasants and mechanics called the people, or the common herd—and he came in contact with them as seldom as possible, out of regard for his charming person, which he cherished and loved passionately. Lithe, healthy, and vigorous as a pike, he was convinced that those kind of people were the small fry, created by providence expressly for the food and delectation of the pike species. ∴

A charming man on the whole, like most selfish people, he was thought much of at the Palace of Justice, at his club, at the Chamber of Notaries, at the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, and at the fencing school. An adept with the small and broad sword, a good drinker, a generous lover as long as his heart was touched, a steady friend among men of his own set, a liberal creditor provided he received punctually the interest of his money, refined in his tastes, fastidious in his dress, spruce as a new pin, constant in his attendance at St. Thomas d'Aquin on Sundays, and at the opera on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; he would have been the most perfect gentleman of his day in appearance as in character had it not been for his unfortunate short-sightedness,

which obliged him to wear spectacles. Need I say that they were gold ones, the lightest and most elegant that could be manufactured by the celebrated Matthew Luna, *Quai des Orfèvres*?

He did not always wear them, but only when he was at his office, or at a client's; and had deeds to read over. You may be sure that on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, when he entered the opera green-room, he took good care to let his fine eyes be seen and admired. No double concave glasses were then allowed to obscure the brightness of his glance. He hardly saw anything, I am bound to confess, and sometimes bowed to one of the chorus in mistake for a "star," but he carried himself, for all that, with the air of an Alexander entering Babylon. For this reason, the goddesses of the ballet, who were fond of giving nicknames to all their acquaintance, had dubbed him, "The Conqueror." One of the secretaries at the Ottoman Embassy, a big, good-natured Turk, they called "Tranquil;" a councillor of state was known as "Melancholy;" and a secretary-general of the Minister of —, who was very quick and noisy in his manners, was christened "Mr. Hurly-Burly." This is why Elise Champagne, commonly known as Champagne II., had received the name of "Hurlina," when she left the rank and file of the *corps de ballet* to be promoted to the front row.

My provincial readers, if indeed this history ever gets beyond the limits of Paris, will naturally pause here, and meditate for a few moments on the preceding paragraph. Methinks I hear at this distance the thousand and one questions which they are mentally asking the author—"What is the green-room, and the *corps de ballet*? What do the 'stars' of the opera, and the *coryphées* mean? And who are the front row, and the chorus ladies?" Again, "How come those secretaries to be wandering about in such society, at the risk of catching a nickname? And a quiet, steady,

good-principled man like M. L'Ambert, how does he find himself three times a week in the ballet green-room, a place so ~~totally~~ opposed to the soberness of his profession, and so strongly at variance with his general demeanour?"

My dear friends, it is precisely because he was a man of good principles, quiet and steady, that he found himself there. The opera green-room in those days was a large square saloon, with faded red velvet benches placed all round it, and occupied by the wealthiest and most influential men in Paris. There one met not only bankers, councillors of state, and secretaries-general, but even dukes, princes, deputies, prefects, and senators entirely devoted to the temporal power of the Pope; the only element lacking was the clergy. One met married Ministers, and even those the most unmistakably married among them. When I say one met, it is not to be supposed that I ever did so, or that a poor devil of an author like me ever passed that magic circle. It was a Minister who held the key of this abode of the Hesperides, and no one could enter without permission from his excellency. The rivalries, the jealousies, the intrigues were worth seeing. Many a cabinet has been overthrown, ostensibly under divers pretexts, but really because each statesman wants to be cock of the walk in the green-room. But do not imagine for a moment that they were attracted here by the allurements of forbidden pleasures; no, it was rather an earnest desire for the encouragement of an art eminently aristocratic and political.

The flight of years has, perhaps, changed all this, for the adventures of Maître Alfred L'Ambert date back a little further than the other day, though they do not go into remote ages. For very good reasons I cannot specify the exact year when this ministerial servant exchanged his aquiline nose for a straight one; that is why I say, as they do in fairy tales, "once upon a time," and you must content yourselves with

fixing this great event somewhere between the burning of Troy by the Greeks and the destruction of the Summer Palace at Pekin by the English, both very important ~~eras~~ in the history of European civilisation.

A contemporary and client of M. L'Ambert, the Marquis d'Ombreule, observed one night at the Café Anglais—"What distinguishes us from the common herd is our fanaticism for the ballet. The lower orders are mad about music. They clap their hands off at Rossini's, Donizetti's, and Auber's operas; it would really seem as if thousands of little notes made into a hodge-podge pleasantly tickle the palates of these sort of people. They are actually so absurd as to sing themselves, with their coarse, hard voices, and the police allow them to meet in certain places for the purpose of murdering a few songs and operatic airs. Much good may it do them; for my part, I never listen to an opera; I look on. I come for the ballet and leave when it is over. My venerable grandmother used to tell me that the great ladies in her day only went to the Opera for the ballet. No encouragement was lacking on their part towards the male dancers, and now our turn has come we protect the ballet girls: *Hont soit qui mal y pense!*

The little Duchess de Bietry, who was young, pretty and neglected, was weak enough to reproach her husband for having become an opera *habitué* after a certain fashion. "Are you not ashamed," said she, "to leave me in my box with all your friends while you take yourself off, heaven knows where?"

"Madame," replied he, "if one is on the look out for an embassy, is it not the proper thing to study politics?"

"Granted; but I should think there were better schools in Paris."

"Not at all. Learn, my dear child, that dancing and politics are twin sisters. To seek to please, to study the

public, to fix your eye on the leader of the orchestra, to keep your countenance, to change the colour of your coat at any moment, to spring from one side to another and back again, to veer round suddenly, to fall on your feet, to smile with your eyes full of tears, equally sums up the tactics of dancing and politics; is it not so?"

The duchess smiled, forgave, and set up a lover!

Great noblemen like the Duke de Bietry, statesmen like the Baron de F——, millionaires like M. S——, and mere notaries like the hero of this story, all elbow each other indiscriminately in the green-room, or behind the scenes of a theatre. They are all on an equality, in the ignorant and simple eyes of the eighty little simpletons who constitute the *corps de ballet*. They call them "our subscribers," they smile on them "free, gratis, for nothing," they prattle to them in nooks and corners, accept their bon-bons, nay, even their diamonds, as trifling attentions which in no way bind these who receive them.

The world, very wrongly, imagines that the opera is an easy-going pleasure market, or a school of profligacy. Virtuous maidens are to be found there in greater numbers than in any other theatre in Paris. And why? Because virtue brings a better price there than anywhere else.

It is interesting to study closely this little world of young girls, nearly all issued from the lowest ranks of the people, whose talents or beauty may raise them in no time to any imaginable height. Principally girls from fourteen to sixteen years of age, living on dry bread and sour apples in some sempstress' garret or porter's lodge; they come slipshod to the theatre, in worn shoes and check gowns, and slip away furtively to dress themselves. A quarter of an hour later down they come to the green-room, radiant, sparkling, decked out in silk, gauze, and flowers, all at the cost of the State; more brilliant than the fairies, angels, and



hours of our dreams. Ministers and princes kiss their hands, and get their dress coats whitened by the paint on their bare arms. Their ears are regaled with madrigals, old and new, as the case may be; which they sometimes happen to understand. A few of them may possess some natural wit, and be able to converse agreeably; and they are in immense request.

The call-boy's bell summons the fairies to the stage. The *habitués* follow them, detain and engross them behind the side scenes. Virtuous subscriber! who braves the risk of falling scenery, of dripping oil lamps, and the most varied effluvia, for the sake of hearing a rather hoarse little voice murmur, "Oh dear! ain't my poor feet aching?"

The curtain rises. The eighty queens of an hour frolic sportively under the gaze of an enraptured public. Each one of them either sees, or imagines amongst the audience, two or three, or a dozen known or unknown adorers. What a gala for them, till the fall of the curtain! They are pretty, decked out, gazed at and admired, and have nothing to fear either from criticism or hisses.

Midnight strikes, and a sudden transformation takes place, as in a fairy tale. Cinderella plods along by the side of her mother, or elder sister, and climbs the frugal heights of Batignolles or Montmartre. She limps a little, poor thing! and splashes her grey stockings. The excellent mater-familias who has concentrated all her hopes on the head of this child, inculcates, on the way, some wise precepts—"Walk straight before you in life, my daughter, and do not fall; but if fate has predestined that a misfortune should happen to you, take care to fall upon a rosewood bedstead."

These lessons of experience are not always followed. The heart occasionally makes itself heard. Male dancers have been known to marry ballet-girls, and one has seen young girls as lovely as the Venus Anadyomene, saving up four

thousand pounds worth of diamonds, to lead to the altar a clerk, with a salary of eighty pounds a year.

Others leave to chance the care of their future destiny, and drive their families to despair. This one will wait till the 10th of April to dispose of her heart, because she has vowed to herself to be virtuous till she is seventeen. That one has seen a protector she fancies, but does not dare admit it, because she is afraid of the vengeance of a certain chamber counsel, who has sworn to kill her and commit suicide afterwards, if she loves any other man than himself. He was joking, of course, but they take things most seriously in their little world. They are as credulous as they are ignorant. Great girls of sixteen have been known to quarrel about the nobility of their origin, and the rank of their families. "Just listen to this young lady!" said the biggest; "her mother's ear-rings are only silver, and those of my father are gold."

M. L'Ambert, after having fluttered like a butterfly, from dark to fair, from fair to dark, at last fixed his admiring gaze upon a pretty brunette, with blue eyes. Mademoiselle Victorine Tompain was a very well-behaved young lady, as, indeed, they all are at the opera, until they cease to be so. She had been well brought up, and was quite incapable of taking any important steps in life without first consulting her parents.

For six months she had been pretty closely pressed by the handsome lawyer, and by that big Turk, Ayvaz Boy, whom they had nicknamed "Tranquil." With each it had been a serious case, a question of her future. The respectable Madame Tompain, her mother, had made her maintain a steady balance between the two, and waited quietly, in a business-like way, to see which would make her the best offer. The Turk was a good fellow, honest and quiet, but somewhat timid; nevertheless, he spoke first and was accepted.

Every one had soon heard the news, every one except Alfred L'Ambert, who was at Poitiers just then, attending the funeral of an uncle. When he returned to Paris and the opera, Mademoiselle Tompain was wearing a beautiful bracelet of diamonds; brilliants sparkled in her ears, and round her swan-like throat was suspended a heart, scintillating like a chandelier. The notary saw nothing of this; as I before told you, he was short-sighted, and was too blind to perceive even the malicious smiles, with which his friends greeted him. He made his rounds, chatted, and was as brilliant as usual, waiting with the greatest impatience for the end of the ballet, and the exit of the young girls. He had made all his calculations, and Mademoiselle Tompain's future was assured, thanks to the death of that good uncle at Poitiers, who had died just at the right moment.

What they call in Paris the Passage de l'Opera is a labyrinth of wide or narrow galleries, light or dark, on different levels, which connect the Boulevard, the Rue Lepeltier, the Rue Drouot, and the Rue Rossini; a long passage, partly uncovered, extends from the Rue Drouot to the Rue Lepeltier, running at right angles to the Galeries du Baromètre and de l'Horloge.

It is at the lower end, two steps from the Rue Drouot, that the private door of the theatre opens for the nightly entrance of the performers. Every alternate midnight, a mighty wave of three or four hundred persons rushes out noisily under the eye of the worthy Papa Monge, the guardian of this paradise; machinists, scene-shifters, chorus singers, dancers, supers, tenors and soprani, authors, composers, managers and subscribers, jostle each other in confusion. Some go over towards the Rue Drouot, the others mount the steps which lead through an open gallery to the Rue Lepeltier.

About the middle of this open passage, at the end of the

Galerie du Baromètre, Alfred L'Ambert smoked his cigar and waited. Ten paces further on, a fat little man, with a red fez on his head, was sending out clouds of smoke from a cigarette of Turkish tobacco, thicker than his little finger. Twenty other idlers on the look out for some one or other, were sauntering or waiting near, each one occupied with his own pursuit, and having no thought for his neighbour.

The singers passed by humming some operatic air, the foot-sore male dancers limped along, and from time to time some female form, enveloped in black, grey, or brown, slipped past the gaslights, utterly unrecognisable to any eyes save those of love.

Couples meet, talk, and disappear without any general leave-taking. But listen—a strange noise and an unusual tumult! Two slender shadows have passed by, two men have rushed forward, two cigars have come into proximity, loud voices are heard, as if in a sudden quarrel. The passers-by congregate to the spot, but find no one; M. Alfred L'Ambert returns alone to his carriage which is waiting for him in the boulevard. He shrugs his shoulders, looking mechanically at a card in his hand, on which has fallen a drop of blood, and reads—

AYVAZ BEY,

*Secretary to the Turkish Embassy,*

Rue de Grenelle St. Germain, 100.

Listen to what the handsome notary is muttering between his teeth—"What an absurd affair! Deuce take it! If I had guessed that she had given any right over herself to that beast of a Turk, for it surely was he! why in the name of fortune had I not got my spectacles on? It seems I gave him a blow on the nose? Yes, his card is stained, and my gloves too. Now I have got this Turk on my hands, all through my own awkwardness, for I owe him no grudge,

poor fellow. I don't care a rap for the girl ; he has got her, let him keep her. Two sensible men don't want to cut each other's throats for Mademoiselle Tompain, but this confounded blow has done the mischief."

This is what he muttered between his teeth, his thirty-two teeth, whiter and sharper than those of a young wolf. He sent his coachman home, and walked on slowly to his club. There he found two of his friends, and told the adventure to them. The old Marquis de Villemaurin, formerly a captain in the Royal guards, and young Henry Steimborg, a stock-broker, were both of opinion that the blow had done the mischief.

## CHAPTER II.

### A CAT HUNT.

A TURKISH philosopher has said, "A blow of any kind is unpleasant, but a blow on the nose is the most unpleasant of all." The same deep thinker adds sensibly, in a subsequent chapter, "To strike an enemy before the woman he loves, is to strike him twice, you wound both mind and body."

This was the reason that the usually placid Ayvaz Bey was foaming with rage, as he escorted Mademoiselle Tompain and her mother to the door of the apartments he had furnished for them. He bade them good-night at the door, jumped into a cab, and had himself driven, all bleeding as he was, to the residence of his friend and colleague, Ahmed Bey.

The latter was sleeping, guarded by a faithful negro ; but if it is written, "on no account awake a friend who sleepeth," it is also written, "wake him, nevertheless, should danger menace thyself or him." Therefore, he was aroused. Ahmed

was a tall Turk, about thirty-five, slender, and with long legs very much bowed. He was an excellent fellow, and clever into the bargain; there is some good in the Turkish nation, whatever people may say to the contrary. As soon as he saw his friend's bleeding face, he at once ordered a basin of cold water to be brought, for it is written, "Thou shalt not deliberate until thy blood stains are washed away; otherwise thy thoughts would be disturbed and impure."

Ayvaz was more quickly cleansed than calmed; he related his misadventure in great anger. The negro, who was a third party to this confidence, immediately seized his kandjar, and offered to go and kill M. L'Ambert! Ahmed Bey thanked him for his kind intentions, and kicked him out of the room. "And now," said he to Ayvaz, "what shall we do?"

"That is simple enough," replied the other. "I shall cut off his nose to-morrow; is not the law of requital, written in the Koran, 'Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, nose for nose?'"

His friend tried to point out to him that although the Koran undoubtedly was a very good book, it was, nevertheless, a little out of date. The code of honour had changed since the time of Mahomet; besides, supposing they followed out the very letter of the law, Ayvaz would only be justified in giving back a blow with his fist. "What right would you have to deprive him of his nose?" continued Ahmed Bey, "he has not cut yours off."

But a young fellow who has just had his nasal organ considerably bruised under the eyes of his mistress, is not likely to listen to reason. Ayvaz insisted upon blood being shed, and Ahmed was at last obliged to promise he should be gratified. "Let it be so," said he; "we represent our country here in a foreign land, and we ought not to receive an insult without resenting it, and showing our courage. But how can you fight a duel with M. L'Ambert, according to the

usages of this country ; you, who have never handled the small sword ? ”

“ What do I want with the small sword ? I intend to cut off his nose, I tell you, and a small sword would not be of much use for that purpose ! ”

“ If you were only a tolerably good hand with a pistol ? ”

“ Are you mad ? What do I want with a pistol to cut off this insolent fellow's nose ? I—yes—I have made up my mind ; go and find him, and arrange everything for a meeting to-morrow. We will fight with sabres ! ”

“ But, my poor fellow, what will you do with a sabre ? I don't doubt your courage, but you must allow that you are not a second Pons ! ”

“ What does that signify ? Get up and go and tell him that I expect him to place his nose at my disposal to-morrow morning ! ”

Ahmed wisely judged that logic here would be out of place, and that he should only lose time by arguing. Of what use is it to preach to a deaf man who clings to his one idea, as the Pope to his temporal power ? He dressed himself, therefore, and taking with him his first dragoman, Osman Bey, who had just then returned from the Cercle Imperial, he drove off to M. L'Ambert's house. It was an unheard-of hour, but Ayvaz would brook no delay.

The god of battles was of the same opinion ; at least, so I judge from what took place. At the very moment that the first Secretary of the Turkish Legation was going to ring at M. L'Ambert's door, he came upon the enemy in person, walking home, accompanied by his two friends.

The moment M. L'Ambert saw their red caps, he took in the situation, bowed, and addressing the new comers said, with a certain dignity, by no means devoid of grace—“ Gentlemen, as I am the sole inhabitant of this house, I can only imagine that the honour of your visit is intended

for me. I am M. L'Ambert; allow me to admit you myself." He rang, pushed open the door, crossed the court with his four nocturnal visitors, and conducted them to his study. Then the two Turks having given their names, M. L'Ambert presented his friends to them, and left them together.

In France, a duel can only take place by the wish, or at any rate the consent, of six persons. Now in this case there were five who were absolutely opposed to such a thing. M. L'Ambert was brave, but he was also perfectly aware that a scandal of this kind on account of a ballet girl was exceedingly compromising to a man in his profession. The Marquis de Villemaurin, the most fastidious and competent authority where any affair of honour was concerned, held that duelling was a noble game, where everything from the beginning to the end should be according to rule. Now a blow on the nose, received on account of a person like Mademoiselle Tompain, was the most ridiculous opening of the game that could be imagined. Moreover, he asseverated on his honour that M. L'Ambert never saw Ayvaz Bey, and that he had no intention of striking either him or any other person. M. L'Ambert had imagined that he recognised the two ladies, and had advanced quickly to salute them. In raising his hand to his hat he had struck some one violently, but not intentionally, coming hurriedly in an opposite direction. It was an accident—awkwardness if you will—but people are not supposed to be called to account for an accident, or even a piece of awkwardness. M. L'Ambert's position and education made it impossible to suppose that he would have purposely given Ayvaz Bey a blow with his fist. His well-known short-sightedness, and the semi-darkness of the Arcade, had been the cause of all the damage done. Indeed, M. L'Ambert, following the advice of his seconds, was quite ready to declare before Ayvaz Bey that he much regretted having accidentally struck him.



This reasoning, accurate enough in itself, derived additional weight from the personality of the speaker. M. de Villemaurin was one of those gentlemen whom death appears to have overlooked, so that they may remind our degenerate age of the valorous deeds of our forefathers. By his register of birth he was only seventy-nine, but by his habits of mind and body, you would imagine he belonged to the 16th century. He thought, talked, and acted like a man who had served in the armies of the League, and harassed the Béarnais King. A rigid Royalist, and an austere Catholic, he carried into his hatred and his love an ardour that exaggerated everything. His courage, his loyalty, his uprightness, and even a certain amount of chivalrous folly, made him the admiration of the inconsistent youth of our day. He never laughed at anything, was slow to take a joke, and looked upon a witticism as a want of respect. He was the least tolerant, the least amiable, and the most honourable old gentleman in the world. He had accompanied Charles X. to Scotland after the disastrous days of July, but at the end of a fortnight he left Holyrood, scandalised to see how little the French Court seemed to realise its evil fortune. He sent in his resignation and permanently cut off his moustachios, which he preserved in a species of casket with this inscription:—"My moustachios of the Royal guard."

His subordinates, officers, and men held him in the highest esteem, but the greatest terror! They whispered to each other that he had once sent to prison for an act of insubordination his only son, a young soldier only twenty-two years of age. This worthy son of his father obstinately refusing to give in, fell ill in his dungeon, and died. Brutus-like, he wept over his son's loss, erected a befitting tomb to his memory, and visited it twice a-week, no matter what the weather or the state of his own health, but, nevertheless, was in no wise overcome by the weight of his remorse!

Upright, and carrying himself with a certain amount of stiffness, unbent by age or sorrow, he was a short, thick-set man, full of vigour, and still keeping up the exercises of his youth. He relied more on a game of tennis than on any doctor for preserving his vigorous health. At seventy, he had contracted a second marriage with a young girl of good family but no fortune. By her he had two children, and did not despair of living to be a grandfather. The love of life, so tenacious in most elderly people, influenced him very little, though his life, on the whole, was happy and prosperous.

When he was seventy-two, he fought his last duel with a dashing six-foot colonel, and various were the motives assigned. Some said politics, others conjugal jealousy! When a man of the marquis' rank and character so warmly espoused M. L'Ambert's cause, when he declared that a duel between Ayvaz Bey and the notary was useless, compromising and in bad form, the articles of peace seemed to be already signed.

Such, at least, was the opinion of M. Henri Steimbourg, who was neither young enough nor curious enough to wish for the spectacle of a duel for his own amusement, and the two Turks, both of them sensible men, momentarily accepted the apology offered to them, at the same time asking permission to consult with Ayvaz Bey, and leaving the enemy in *statu quo* while they ran off to the embassy. It was four o'clock in the morning, but the marquis only slept as a matter of duty, and made a point of coming to some decision before going to bed. As to the incensed Ayvaz Bey, at the first word of reconciliation from his friends, he burst out at once into a real Turkish rage.

"Am I a fool!" cried he, brandishing the jasmine-wood chibouque, which had hitherto been keeping him company. "Do you want to persuade me that I ran my nose against M. L'Ambert's fist? He struck me, and the proof of it is

the apology he offers. What are words when blood has been spilt? Can I forget that both Victorine and her mother witnessed my disgrace? Oh, my friends, there is nothing left for me but death if I do not cut off the nose of my insulter to-morrow."

Willy-nilly, the seconds were obliged once more to take up the cudgels. Ahmed and the dragoman were both sufficiently reasonable to find their friend in error, but too warm-hearted to desert his cause half-way.

If the ambassador, Hamza Pasha, had happened to be in Paris, in all probability the affair would have been stopped officially, but, unfortunately, he was ambassador both to England and France, and was then in London. Ayvaz's seconds flew to and fro like shuttles till seven o'clock in the morning, between the Rue de Grenelle and the Rue de Verneuil, without greatly advancing matters. At last, M. L'Ambert, losing all patience, said to his seconds—"This Turk bores me. He is not satisfied with having done me out of little Tompain, but now my gentleman wants to make me pass a sleepless night. All right: let the thing go on, otherwise he may think I am afraid of meeting him face to face; only, if you please, let us make haste and try, if possible, to put an end to the affair this morning. My carriage will be ready in ten minutes, we will drive two miles out of Paris. I shall give my Turk a lesson in double quick time, and get back to my office before any of the scandal-loving newspapers have wind of the affair."

The marquis again raised one or two objections, but ended by owning that M. L'Ambert had no alternative. Ayvaz Bey's persistence was in the worst possible taste, and he deserved a good lesson. No one seemed for a moment to doubt but that the warlike notary, so famed in the fencing schools, was the chosen instrument of fate to give a lesson in French politeness to this Osmanli.

"My dear fellow," said the marquis, tapping his friend on the shoulder, "our position is first-rate, for we have right on our side; the rest we must leave in the hands of providence. The sequel may be easily guessed; for you have a stout heart and a quick hand; but remember, never do your worst; duelling is only meant to punish fools, not to destroy them; only an awkward fellow kills his man under pretext of teaching him how to live."

The choice of arms fell by right to Ayvaz Bey, and the notary and his seconds could not refrain from making a grimace when they found he had chosen sabres. "It is the weapon of a common soldier," said the marquis, "or of a citizen who does not want to fight; however, let it be sabres, if you insist upon it."

Ayvaz Bey's seconds declared they were bent upon it, and they sent for two cavalry swords from the barracks on the Quai d'Orsay, appointing to meet at ten o'clock in the little village of Parthenay, on the old road to Sceaux. It was now half-past eight.

Every Parisian knows this pretty cluster of about two hundred houses, the inhabitants of which are richer, cleaner, and better informed than the general run of our villagers. They cultivate their ground like gardeners, not labourers, and every spring the whole parish resembles a little paradise on earth. Fields of flowering strawberries spread their silvery space between little forests of gooseberries and raspberries, whole acres exhale the acrid perfume of black currants, that odour so fragrant to the nostrils of Parisian porters. Paris buys with bright, golden louis the harvest of Parthenay, and those honest peasants that one sees walking slowly along—a watering-can in each hand—are in fact small capitalists.

They eat meat twice a day, despise chicken broth, and prefer roast fowl. They pay the salaries of a communal school-

master and doctor, have built a mairie and a church, without borrowing the money, and vote for my witty friend, Dr. Véron, at the elections to the Corps Legislatif. If I remember rightly, their daughters are all pretty.

That learned archæologist, Cubaudet, archivist of the Subprefecture of Sceaux, asserts that Parthenay is a Greek colony, which derives its name from Parthenos, virgin or young girl (the words are synonymous in polite society); but this discussion is carrying us away from Ayvaz Bey.

He was the first to arrive at the place of meeting. His anger still unabated, he strode proudly up and down the village square, awaiting his opponent, and hiding under his cloak two formidable yataghans, with splendid Damascus blades. But why do I call them Damascus? They were Japanese steel, the kind that cuts asunder a bar of pig-iron as easily as a bundle of asparagus, provided only the arm that wields it be equal to the occasion.

Ahmed Bey and the faithful dragoman followed their friend, giving him all kinds of good advice: to attack carefully, to expose himself as little as possible, to retreat with a bound; in fact, everything one would think of saying to a novice who had never fought a duel before.

"Thank you for nothing," said this obstinate young fellow; "one does not need all this science to cut off a notary's nose."

The particular object of his vengeance soon greeted his sight between two spectacle glasses, at the open door of a private carriage. But M. L'Ambert did not get out; he contented himself with bowing. The marquis alighted and came towards Ahmed Bey—"I know of an excellent spot about twenty minutes' drive from here," said he. "Be good enough to return to your carriage with your friends, and follow me."

The belligerents took a cross road, and alighted about half a mile from the houses. "Gentlemen," said the mar-

quis, "we can easily reach the little wood you see yonder on foot, and our horses can wait for us here. We have omitted to bring a surgeon ; but the footman I have left at Parthenay will bring on the village doctor to us."

The Turk's driver was one of those Parisian marauders who drive about after midnight under a false number. Ayvaz Bey had hailed him at Mademoiselle Tompain's door, and had kept him on till they reached Parthenay. The old rascal smiled when he saw that they stopped in the open, and carried swords under their cloaks. "Good luck to you, sir," said he to Ayvaz. "Oh! nothing will happen to you ; I always bring my fares good luck. Only last year I brought one back who had spitted his man. He gave me twenty-five francs to drink his health, as true as I sit here."

"I'll give you fifty," said Ayvaz, "if providence will only let me avenge myself in my own fashion."

"M. L'Ambert was a very skilful swordsman, but too well known in the schools ever to have had occasion to fight. A duel, therefore, was as great a novelty to him as to Ayvaz Bey, and though he had often vanquished the fencing masters of various cavalry regiments in an assault of arms, he felt a sort of nervous trepidation which, though not fear, produced analogous effects. His conversation in the carriage had been lively and brilliant ; he had shown a real, though somewhat feverish, gaiety as he chatted with his friends, and had lighted three or four cigars *en route*, under pretext of smoking. When they all alighted, he walked with a firm step—rather too firm, perhaps. At the bottom of his heart he was a prey to a certain apprehension altogether manly, and altogether French ; he mistrusted the strength of his nervous system, and dreaded not to appear as brave as he ought.

It would seem that the faculties of the mind are doubly keen in the most critical moments of life. Thus M. L'Am-

bert was doubtless greatly pre-occupied with the importance of the little drama in which he was to play a part, and yet he felt his attention irresistibly drawn to the most insignificant objects of the exterior world, which at any other time would hardly have attracted his notice. To his eyes nature seemed to be illumined by a clearer, brighter, more trenchant light than the ordinary rays of the sun; his pre-occupied mind seemed to take in everything that passed before his eyes. At the turning of a path he saw a cat, which was creeping stealthily between two rows of gooseberry bushes. It was a species of cat often seen in villages—long and thin, with sandy-coloured fur; one of those half-starved, wild animals, whose master generally allows him to eat all the mice he can catch! This one, no doubt having found the house badly provisioned as to game of this kind, had gone a-field in search of a more plentiful supply.

M. L'Ambert's eyes having wandered aimlessly about for some time, suddenly felt themselves drawn to, and as it were fascinated by, the antics of this cat. He observed it attentively, admired its supple limbs, the firm cut of its jaw, and thought he was making a great discovery in natural history, when he remarked how closely a cat resembles a tiger!

"What the deuce are you staring at there?" said the marquis, touching him on the shoulder.

He instantly recovered himself, and, in a careless tone, replied—"That ugly beast changed the current of my thoughts; you have no idea what a nuisance we find them in the shooting season. They devour more coveys than fall to our guns—If I only had a gun at this moment."

And suiting the action to the word, he pretended to aim at the cat. The animal, as if guessing his intention, jumped backwards, and disappeared. They saw it again, a hundred yards further off, in the middle of a colza field, calmly washing its face as if awaiting the arrival of the Parisians.

"Do you mean to follow us?" said the notary, repeating his former menace.

The prudent beast again fled, but reappeared at the edge of the clearing where they were going to fight. M. L'Ambert, with all the superstition of a gambler about to stake a large sum, insisted upon driving away this unlucky fetish. He threw a stone, without hitting it, and the cat climbed up a tree and there remained motionless.

The seconds had by this time chosen the ground, and lots had been drawn for places. The best fell to M. L'Ambert, and as good luck would have it, fortune again decided in favour of his weapons, instead of the Japanese yataghans, which he might have been rather puzzled to use. Ayvaz did not trouble himself about anything; every sword was the same to him. He looked at the nose of his opponent, as the angler looks at the beautiful trout hanging to the end of his line!

Quickly divesting himself of such garments as were not absolutely necessary, he threw his red fez and his green frock-coat on the grass, and turned up his shirt sleeves to the elbow. I believe the most sleepy of Turks wakes up at the clash of arms. This fat fellow, with his usually good-natured countenance, seemed absolutely transfigured! His face brightened, his eyes flashed, he took a sabre from the marquis, stepped back a couple of paces, and then poured forth, in the Turkish language, the following poetic improvisation, which his friend, Osman Bey, retained and kindly translated for us.

"I have armed myself for the fight; woe to the giaour who offends me. Blood demands blood. Thou hast struck me with the hand. I, Ayvaz, son of Ruchdi, will strike thee with the sword. Thy mutilated face shall create laughter among all; pretty women shall turn from thee in disgust. The perfume of the roses of Symir shall be lost



to thee for ever. If Mahomet only gives me strength, I ask no one for courage. Hurrah ! I have armed myself for the fight !”

So saying, he threw himself on his adversary ; whether he attacked him in *tierce* or in *quart*, I know not, neither did he, nor the seconds, nor M. L'Ambert ; but a stream of blood spurted from the point of the sabre, a pair of spectacles slid to the ground, and the notary felt his head already lightened of the whole weight of his nose. There may have still remained a little bit, but so little I can only speak of it as a detail.

M. L'Ambert fell backwards, but got on his feet again almost immediately, and ran off with his head bent down like a blind man, or one possessed ; at the same moment an opaque body fell from the branches of a neighbouring tree ; a few minutes later they saw approaching a thin little man, hat in hand, followed by a big servant in livery. It was M. Triquet, the medical officer of Parthenay.

Welcome worthy M. Triquet ! a brilliant Paris notary has great need of your services ; replace your old hat on your bald head, wipe away the perspiration which shines on your red cheek bones like the dew on two full-blown peonies, and turn up as quickly as possible the shiny sleeves of your venerable black coat.

But the poor man was too much excited to be able to get to work directly. He chattered, chattered, chattered in a thin, panting, shaky voice. “ Good heavens !” said he, “ my respects to you, gentlemen, I am your very humble servant. Dear Lord ! Can such doings be permitted ? it's nothing short of mutilation ; I see decidedly it is too late to talk of reconciliation, the evil is done. Ah, gentlemen, gentlemen, youth will be youth. I myself was once very nearly led away to destroy a fellow creature ; it was in 1820. What did I do, gentlemen ? I apologised, yes, apologised, and I

take all the more credit to myself, for I was in the right in the matter. Have you ever read Rousseau's grand argument against duelling? Quite irrefutable, a piece of literary and moral chrestomathy, and, mind you, Rousseau has not said everything; if he had studied the human frame, that *chef d'œuvre* of creation, God's admirable image upon earth, he would have demonstrated how wicked it is to destroy so perfect a whole. I am not speaking at the person who has done the deed—heaven forbid!—no doubt he had his reasons, which I respect. If you only knew the trouble we poor doctors have in curing even the smallest wound; it is true we make our living by it, but what does that signify? For my own part, I would rather deprive myself of many things, and live on bacon and brown bread, than witness the sufferings of my fellow creatures."

The marquis interrupted these lamentations. "How, now, doctor, we did not come here to philosophise," said he. "Here is a man bleeding like a pig, the question is how to stop the hemorrhage."

"Yes, marquis," repeated he quickly, "the hemorrhage, that is the right word; happily I foresaw all that. Here is a little bottle of styptic water; it is a preparation of Brocchieri, and I prefer it to Léchelle's prescription."

Upon which he turned, with the bottle in his hand, towards M. L'Ambert, who was seated at the foot of a tree, bleeding piteously. "Sir," said he with a low bow, "believe me when I say how much I regret not owing the honour of your acquaintance to a less painful event."

Maitre L'Ambert raised his head, and in a doleful voice asked—"Doctor, shall I lose my nose?"

"No, sir, you will not lose it, for, alas! you have no longer one to lose—you have already lost it, honoured sir." While speaking, he poured out some Brocchieri water on a fold of lint.

"Heavens!" cried he suddenly, "I have an idea I can restore to you the useful and pleasant organ that you have lost."

"What the deuce do you mean? speak out; my whole fortune shall be yours! Oh, doctor, I would rather die at once, than remain thus disfigured for life."

"So you say, but let me see, where is the piece that has been cut off? I am not a champion of the profession, like Volpeau or Hugier, but I will try to mend matters by what we call the first intention."

M. L'Ambert jumped up and ran quickly to the field of battle, the marquis and M. Steimbourg following him; the Turks also who were walking sadly together—for Ayvaz Bey's anger had soon vanished—drew near to their quondam enemies. The place was easily found where the combatants had trampled the tender grass under foot; the notary's spectacles were picked up, but the notary's nose was nowhere. What they did see, was a cat, a horrible sandy cat, licking its bloody lips with evident enjoyment!

"Great heavens!" yelled the marquis, pointing to the beast; every one understood the gesture, and the exclamation.

"Would there still be time?" enquired the notary.

"Perhaps," replied the doctor.

Nothing for it but to give chase, but the cat, not caring to be taken, ran off also. Never had the little wood of Parthenay witnessed such a hunt, and in all probability it never will again. A marquis, a stockbroker, three diplomatists, a footman in full livery, a village doctor, and a notary holding his handkerchief to his bleeding face; one and all rushing wildly after one lean cat!

Running, shouting, throwing stones, dead branches, or anything that came to hand, they crossed roads and clearings, and plunged headlong into the thickest brushwood;

sometimes in a group, sometimes dispersed, sometimes in single file, sometimes ranged in a circle around the enemy ; beating the bushes, shaking the shrubs, climbing the trees, scratching their boots against the stumps and tearing their clothes with the brambles, they swept on like a tempest, but the infernal cat was swifter than the wind.

Twice they surrounded him on all sides, twice he broke the circle and made off. At one moment he seemed overcome by fatigue and pain. He had fallen on his side in trying to jump from one tree to another on the track of the squirrels. M. L'Ambert's servant rushed upon him, reached him with a bound, and seized him by the tail. But this miniature tiger got loose again by freely making use of its claws, and fled out of the wood. They followed him into the open, in spite of the long distance they had already come, nothing daunted by the immense plain which stretched out like a chess-board before the pursuers and their prey.

The heat was oppressive, heavy black clouds were gathering in the west, the perspiration ran down every face ; but nothing could stay the impetuosity of these eight men. M. L'Ambert, all bleeding as he was, encouraged his companions by voice and gesture. No one who has not seen a notary in pursuit of his own nose can form a just idea of his ardour. Good-bye strawberries and raspberries ! adieu gooseberries and black currants !—wherever the avalanche had passed all hopes of harvest were trodden down, destroyed, annihilated, nothing remained but crushed flowers, shoots torn off, branches broken, and stems trampled under foot. The peasants—surprised by the sudden invasion of this unknown torrent, threw down their watering-cans, crying out for the rural police, and loudly demanding satisfaction for the injury done to their property—in their turn gave chase to the hunters.

Victory ! At last the cat is secure ; it has thrown itself

down a well. Oh ! for a bucket ! a rope ! a ladder ! They make sure of finding the notary's nose intact, or, at any rate, nearly so. But, alas ! this well is not like an ordinary well, it is the mouth of an old quarry, whose galleries extend in all directions in a network of more than ten miles, and then lose themselves in the catacombs of Paris !

M. Triquet's services were well paid ; the country people all received the indemnity they demanded, and then, sad and disappointed, the disconsolate party returned in a deluge of rain to Parthenay.

Before getting into his carriage, Ayvaz Bey, dripping like a drowned rat and entirely cooled down, came up and offered his hand to M. L'Ambert. "Sir," said he, "I sincerely regret that my obstinacy has carried matters so far. That little Tompain is not worth even a drop of the blood which has been shed for her. I shall dismiss her to-morrow, for I could never see her again without thinking of the misfortune she has caused. You are a witness that I did all I could to help those gentlemen to recover what you have lost. I can only hope that the injury is not irreparable. The village doctor has reminded us that there are in Paris more skilful practitioners than himself, and I fancy I have heard that modern surgery possesses many infallible appliances for the restoration of either mutilated or destroyed organs."

M. L'Ambert, with rather a bad grace, accepted the hand so loyally offered, and was driven back with his two friends to the Faubourg St. Germain.

## CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH THE NOTARY DEFENDS HIS SKIN MORE SUCCESSFULLY.

A THOROUGHLY happy fellow was the Jehu of Ayvaz Bey. This veteran Parisian *gamin* actually felt less pleasure in his tip of fifty francs than in having driven his honour's chariot wheels to victory, as he called it.

"Beg pardon, sir," said he to Ayvaz Bey, "is this the way you polish people off? It is just as well to know, for if I had the misfortune to tread on your toes I should lose no time in asking your pardon. The poor gentleman would find it rather difficult to take a pinch of snuff! Well, well; if any one says before me that the Turks are duffers, I shall know what answer to make. I told you I should bring you good luck. Now I know an old fellow from Brion's who is just the other way; he casts the evil eye on all his fares—any one he takes out is sure to be floored! Gee up, my beauty! on the way to glory, hallelujah! The Carrousel horses can't hold a candle to you to-day!"

This rather cruel buffoonery did not in the least disturb the gravity of the three Turks, and the coachman apparently was the only person to appreciate his own wit.

Meanwhile, in a carriage infinitely better horsed and appointed, the unfortunate notary was bemoaning himself to his two friends. "It is all up with me," he said, "I'm no better than a dead man; there is nothing left but to blow my brains out. I can never go into society again, nor to the Opera, nor any other theatre. How can I present to the eyes of the world so lamentable and grotesque a face, which in some might excite pity while others would only laugh!"

"Pooh!" replied the marquis, "the world in time gets accustomed to anything; besides, after all, if you dread its remarks you can always stay at home."

"Stay at home for ever! what a charming prospect! Do you suppose women would come and console me at home in the state to which I am now reduced?"

"You must marry. I once knew a captain of cuirassiers who had lost an arm, a leg, and an eye. As you may imagine, the women did not rave about him, but he married a nice girl, neither pretty nor ugly, who loved him devotedly, and made his life perfectly happy."

Perhaps M. L'Ambert did not see anything very attractive in the proposal, for he cried in a tone of despair—"Oh, women, women, women!"

"Good heavens," exclaimed the marquis, "your ideas, unlike a weathercock, always turn in the same direction. There are other things in the world besides women. Why the deuce can't you turn over a new leaf? Cultivate your talents, work out your salvation, do good to your neighbour; in fact, fulfil all the duties of your station in life. It is not necessary to have such a long nose to be a good Christian, a good citizen, and a good notary."

"Notary!" repeated he, with ill-concealed bitterness; "notary, indeed, that is about all, I take it. Yesterday I was a man of the world, a gentleman, and I may say, without any false modesty, was tolerably sought after in the best society. To-day I am only a notary, and who knows if I shall be even that to-morrow? It only needs the slightest indiscretion on the part of my servant to make this absurd affair known everywhere; if only a hint of it gets into any of the newspapers the authorities would feel obliged to take proceedings against my opponent, his seconds, and even yourselves, gentlemen. Think of us all figuring in a police-court, relating why and how I followed Mademoiselle Tompain! Ima-

gine such a scandal, and tell me whether my notaryship could survive it!"

"My dear fellow," remonstrated the marquis, "you are raising bugbears. Men of our position—and you are to some extent one of us—have the privilege of cutting each other's throats with impunity. The authorities wink at our quarrels, and quite right, too. I can understand a fuss being made when journalists, artists, and others of an inferior grade take a sword into their hands. It is necessary to remind such fellows that they have fists to fight with, the fittest kind of weapon to defend the sort of honour they possess. But when a gentleman acts as a gentleman the law has nothing to say, and will say nothing. I have had fifteen or twenty affairs of this sort since I left the army, and some of them very unfortunate, for my adversaries, I can tell you; but have you ever seen my name in the police reports?"

M. Steimbourg was less intimate with M. L'Ambert than the Marquis de Villemaurin. Unlike the latter, his title-deeds had not been lying in the office of the Rue de Vernet for the last four or five generations. He only knew these gentlemen from having met them at the club and the whist table. The notary might possibly have put him up to a good thing or two in the way of stock operations. But he was a good fellow, and a sensible man, and now added his mite in the way of reasoning with, and trying to console, this unfortunate being.

In his opinion M. de Villemaurin took too gloomy a view of the matter. Surely there must be some alternative. To say that M. L'Ambert must remain thus disfigured for the rest of his life was to ignore completely the power of science.

"What would be the advantage of being born in the nineteenth century," said he, "if the slightest accident that befalls us is to prove, as in former days, an irreparable mis-



fortune? What superiority should we possess over those who lived in the dark ages? Do not let us blaspheme the sacred name of progress—operative surgery is now, thank heaven, more flourishing than ever in Ambroise Pare's native country. That old fellow at Parthenay mentioned the names of several celebrated operators who, so to speak, successfully repair the human frame. Here we are, at the gates of Paris; let us stop at the first chemist's, and he will tell us where to find either Velpeau or Hugier; your servant can then run for one or the other, and bring him on to your house. I am certain I have often heard of surgeons who have replaced an eyelid, a lip, or the tip of an ear. Is it more difficult to restore the tip of a nose?"

It was rather a vague hope. Still it helped to cheer the poor notary, whose wound for the last half hour had ceased bleeding. The very idea of once more becoming what he had been, resuming the daily routine of his life again, made him almost beside himself with joy.

"Oh, my friends," said he, nervously twisting his fingers together, "my whole fortune belongs to the man who shall cure me. I will submit calmly to any amount of pain if success is only certain; I shall take no account of expense or suffering." In this frame of mind he reached his house, while his valet went in search of a surgeon.

The marquis and M. Steimbourg accompanied him to his room, and there left him—the one to go home and reassure his wife and daughters, whom he had not seen since the previous evening; the other to rush off to the Bourse.

Left quite alone,\* opposite to a Venetian mirror, which mercilessly reflected his pitiable appearance, Alfred L'Ambert fell into a state of the deepest despondency. This strong man, who never allowed himself to weep at the theatre, because he thought it bad form; this gentleman of serene aspect, who had attended the funeral of both his parents

without exhibiting any emotion, now wept over the mutilation of his handsome face, and deluged it with his selfish tears.

The entrance of the servant at this moment diverted his attention from this bitter gaiety to the coming visit of M. Bernier, the surgeon of the Hôtel Dieu, a member of the Society of Surgeons, of the Academy of Medicine, and professor of Clinical Surgery, &c., &c. The man, in his anxiety, had gone to the nearest doctor, and, luckily for his master, he had hit upon a very clever one, for though M. Bernier may not, perhaps, quite equal Velpeau, Manec, and Hugier, he treads very closely on the heels of these gentlemen.

"Let him come," cried M. L'Ambert. "What is keeping him? Does he think I am like 'patience on a monument?'" Thereupon he began to weep again, actually to weep before his servant. Is it possible that a mere sabre cut can so completely metamorphose a man's demeanour? Assuredly when he cut through the nasal channel Ayvaz Bey must at the same time have injured the lachrymal gland and caused the tear ducts to overflow.

The notary dried his eyes for the purpose of looking through a book which had just been sent in by M. Steinbourg. It was a treatise on practical surgery, by Ringuet, an excellent work, embellished with three hundred engravings. M. Steinbourg had bought it on his way to the Bourse, and sent it to his friend, doubtless hoping that it would serve to encourage him.

But the effect was very different from what had been anticipated. When M. L'Ambert had turned over about two hundred pages, and had seen arrayed before his eyes a lamentable succession of amputations, cauterisations, ligatures and resections, he could endure no more. Letting the book fall from his hands, he threw himself into an arm-chair, and closed his eyes.

In vain! His mental vision still beheld skin laid open,

muscles held aside by hooks, limbs dissected, by sweeping knife-stroke, and bones sawn through by the hands of invisible operators. The faces of the patients appeared to him, as they invariably do in anatomical drawings, calm, stoical, and indifferent to pain; and he asked himself if it were possible such a wonderful amount of courage could ever have found place in the human soul. Above all, he was haunted by one of the pictures—the figure of a little surgeon on page 80, dressed in black, with a velvet collar to his coat. This strange-looking person had rather a large head, with a high, bald forehead, and a serious expression of countenance. He is depicted sawing asunder the two bones of a living leg.

"Monster!" exclaimed the notary, who at that moment saw the monster in the flesh, as his servant announced M. Bernier.

M. L'Ambert fled into the farthest corner of the room, staring wildly, and holding his hands before him, as if to keep off an enemy, his teeth chattering as he murmured in a stifled voice, like the hero of one of M. Xavier Montépin's novels, "'Tis he! 'tis he! 'tis he!"

"Sir," said the doctor, "I am sorry to have kept you waiting, and I beg you to calm yourself; I know all about your accident, and I don't think the evil is without remedy, but we shall do no good if you are afraid of me."

Fear is a word that rings discordantly in the ear of a Frenchman. M. L'Ambert stamped his foot, walked straight up to the doctor, and said with a little laugh, too nervous to be natural—"By Jove! doctor, you must be jesting; do I look like a man who is afraid? Had I been a coward, I should not have run the risk of being disfigured in this fashion. But while waiting for you I was turning over the pages of a book on surgery, and there I found a face so exactly like yours that when you entered I felt convinced I

saw a ghost! Add to this surprise all I have gone through this morning—perhaps even a slight touch of fever—and I think you will be inclined to forgive the strange reception you have met with.”

“That’s right,” said M. Bernier, picking up the book; “oh, I see, you have been reading Ringuet; he is a friend of mine, and now I think of it, he had an engraving of me done to the life from a water colour of Lèveille’s, but let me beg of you to be seated.”

The notary grew more collected, and narrated the events of the morning, not forgetting the episode of the cat, who had, so to speak, made him lose his nose twice over.

“It is certainly a misfortune,” said the surgeon, “but one that can be repaired in a month. Since reading Ringuet’s book, you must have some idea of the necessary surgery?”

M. L’Ambert confessed that he had not had the courage to read so far as the chapter in question.

“Well then,” said the doctor, “I will give you the pith of it in few words—rhinoplasty is the art of making a new nose for those unfortunates who have lost their own.”

“Is it really true, doctor, this miracle is possible? Science has indeed discovered a way to—”

“She has discovered no less than three; but I must put the French plan entirely aside, it is not applicable in this case; had you not lost so large a portion of your nose, I might have lifted the edges of the wound, fastened them up a little, brought them together again, and left them to grow together by what is styled the first intention, but this is out of the question now, we must no longer think of it.”

“And I am only too thankful that it is so,” said the wounded man. “you cannot conceive, doctor, the effect your words, which raise as it were the edges of the wound and freshen them up, have on my nerves—pray let us think of some less painful method.”

"Surgeons, as a rule, do not adopt tender measures, but at any rate you have the choice of two methods—the Indian and the Italian. The first consists in cutting a triangular piece of skin out of the forehead, the point below, the base above; this is the foundation of the new nose! The piece of skin is loosened entirely with the exception of the lower pedicle, which remains adherent; this is twisted so as to let the epidermis remain outside, and the edges are sewn to the corresponding sides of the wound. In a word I am ready to make you a very presentable nose at the expense of your forehead. The ultimate success of the operation is certain, but you must make up your mind to a large and ineffaceable scar on the forehead."

"No scar for me, doctor. I won't have it at any price, I will even go so far as to say—pray excuse my apparent weakness—I will have no operation. I have already undergone one to-day, at the hands of that confounded Turk, and I do not wish for another, the very thought of it freezes my blood. My courage is as great as most men's, but I have highly strung nerves. I have no fear of death, but I shrink from suffering. Kill me if you like, but for heaven's sake do not hack me about any further!"

"Sir," replied the doctor, in a slightly ironical tone, "if you have made up your mind so completely against any operation you should have sent for a homœopath, not a surgeon."

"Please do not laugh at me, but really I cannot get over the idea of this operation. The Indians are savages, and their practice worthy of themselves; but did you not mention the Italian method? I do not like the Italians politically, they are an ungrateful nation, and have behaved in a most shameful manner to their legitimate rulers, but in matters of science I have a better opinion of the scoundrels!"

"Very well then, let us decide in favour of the Italian

practice—sometimes it succeeds admirably, but it requires an amount of patience and an immobility of which perhaps you might not be capable.”

“If it only requires patience and immobility, I can answer for myself.”

“Are you capable of remaining for thirty days in a most uncomfortable position?”

“Yes.”

“With your nose sewn to your left arm?”

“Yes.”

“Very well, then all I have to do is to cut a triangular piece of flesh out of your arm about six inches long and four wide, I—”

“You intend to cut that out of my flesh?”

“Certainly.”

“But, doctor, that is something too horrible, to flay me alive, to cut strips out of the skin of a living man; no, it is too barbarous, it is a device of the middle ages, and worthy of Shylock, the Jew of Venice.”

“The wound in the arm is nothing, the difficulty will be to remain sewn to yourself for a whole month.”

“For my part, I dread nothing but the stroke of the scalpel; to feel the cold steel enter your living flesh is a thing never to be forgotten for the rest of one’s life. Thanks, my dear doctor, I don’t wish for a repetition of it.”

“That being the case, sir, I have nothing more to do here, and you must remain noseless for the rest of your life.”

This frightful alternative overwhelmed the notary with consternation. He tore his beautiful light hair, and paced the room like a maniac. “Mutilated,” sighed he, with tears in his eyes. “Mutilated for ever, and no remedy for my misfortune! If only there was some drug, some magic ointment, by virtue of which a nose could be restored to

him who had lost it, I would buy it at its weight in gold. Yes! I would send to the ends of the earth in search of it. I would even charter a ship, if it were absolutely necessary! But no, there is nothing to be done! Of what good is my wealth? of what use your renown as an operator, if neither your skill nor my sacrifices can obtain the thing I need? Riches, science—what empty words!”

From time to time M. Bernier struck in, in his calm, imperturbable manner—“Only let me cut a strip out of your arm, and I can easily enough replace your nose.”

At one time M. L'Ambert seemed to have made up his mind. He took off his coat, rolled up his shirt sleeve, but when he looked on the open case, when the polished steel of thirty instruments of torture flashed before his eyes, he turned pale, and fell half fainting into a chair. Some drops of aromatic vinegar soon restored his consciousness, but not his resolution. “It is of no use, doctor,” said he, readjusting his garments. “Our generation can boast of plenty of courage, but we tremble at the thought of pain; it is the fault of our parents who have made molly-coddles of us!”

A few minutes after, this religiously-brought-up young man began to blaspheme Providence. “Truly,” said he, “this world is a bear garden, and I must compliment the Creator on His work! Here am I, with 200,000 francs a year, and yet I must remain snub-nosed as a death's head, while my porter, who has not ten crowns to bless himself with, sports a nose worthy of the Apollo Belvedere! That wisdom which foresees most things, never foresaw that I should have my nose cut off by a Turk for bowing to Mademoiselle Tompain! At this moment, there are in France no less than three millions of rascals whose whole body would not fetch ten sous each, and yet I, with all my money, am not able to buy a nose from one of these creatures—but, after all, why not?”

His face suddenly brightened with a ray of hope, as he continued, in a calmer tone—"My old uncle, who recently died at Poitiers, had, now I think of it, several ounces of blood injected into his veins during his last illness, thanks to the devotion of an old and faithful Breton servant who supplied this fluid for the experiment. And my beautiful aunt, Madame Giromeny, in the height of her beauty, ordered a front tooth to be drawn from the mouth of her handsomest waiting maid to replace one she had just lost! The graft took very well, and only cost her three louis! Doctor, did you not say that if it had not been for that brute of a cat, you could have sewn my nose again to my face while the piece was still warm. Tell me, yes or no?"

"Certainly, and I say so again."

"Then, if I were to buy some poor devil's nose, could you not just as easily graft that on to the middle of my face?"

"I could."

"Bravo!"

"But I shall not do it, and not one of my brother practitioners would do it either."

"And for what reason, pray?"

"Because it would be a crime to mutilate a healthy man, even if the patient were hungry enough, or stupid enough, to consent."

"Really, doctor, you upset all my preconceived notions of justice. My substitute in the conscription was a hybrid Alsatian, with a skin like a burnt chestnut. My man (I have surely a perfect right to call him so) had his head carried off by a cannon ball, on the 30th of April, 1849. As the shot in question was certainly meant by fate for me, I may say that the Alsatian sold me not only his head, but his whole body, for a hundred or a hundred and forty louis. The State not only tolerated, but approved of this transac-



tion ; you can have nothing to say against it. Most likely you bought, for the same price, a man who got himself killed in your stead ; yet when I offer to give twice that sum to any scoundrel that may turn up, merely for the tip of his nose, mind you, you cry shame ! ”

The doctor was silent for a moment, hoping to hit upon a logical answer, but not finding what he wanted, he said to M. L'Ambert—“ Though my conscience forbids me to disfigure a fellow creature in your behalf, I see no reason why I should not take the few inches of skin that you require out of the arm of some poor fellow. ”

“ That's right, my dear doctor ; take them when you please ; only repair this stupid accident. Let us look out at once for some good-natured fellow, and long life to the Italian method ! ”

“ Again I must remind you that you will have to remain a whole month in a state of extreme discomfort. ”

“ What do I care ? I shall be disporting myself again in another month in the green-room of the Opera ! ”

“ Very good ; have you any one in your mind—for instance that porter you mentioned just now ? ”

“ The very man ; I might easily buy him and his whole family, wife included, for ten pounds. When my old porter, Bartereau, retired, heaven knows whither, to live on his means, this fellow was recommended to me by one of my clients. Poor wretch, he was literally dying of starvation ! ”

M. L'Ambert rang the bell, and gave orders to send up Singuet, the new porter.

The man came immediately, and uttered a cry of horror when he saw his master's face. He was the true type of a poor Parisian devil ; the poorest and most ill-conditioned of all devils. A little man of thirty-five, whom you would have taken for sixty, he was so thin, and yellow, and wizened.

M. Bernier examined him all round, and soon sent him back

to his lodge. "That man's skin is good for nothing," said the doctor. "You must remember that gardeners always choose their grafts from the healthiest and most vigorous trees. Pick me out a fine, robust fellow amongst your servants ; there must be such a one out of the whole lot."

"No doubt, it is very easy to talk of picking out one ; but allow me to tell you my servants are all gentlemen, men of capital, who have money in the funds, and speculate on the Bourse, like all the servants in good houses ! I don't know one among them who would be willing to buy with his flesh and blood the vile dross that is so easily picked up at the Bourse."

"But you might, perhaps, find one whose personal devotion would induce him to—"

"Devotion amongst such a set ? You must be joking, doctor ! Our fathers had devoted servants—we have nothing but worthless flunkeys, and perhaps in the long run we gain by it. Our fathers being beloved by their people, thought it only right and proper to make them some return. They condoned their faults, nursed them in illness, and provided for them in their old age—it was the very deuce ! I pay my servants to do their work, and if it is not properly done, I don't stop to find out if it is temper, illness, or infirmity, but I give them the sack !"

"At that rate, we are not likely to find the man we want under this roof ; can you think of no one else ?"

"Not I, but surely any one will do, the first who comes—the commissionaire round the corner, why not that very man I hear in the streets shouting water at this moment ?"

He took his spectacles from his pocket, drew aside the curtain, and looking into the Rue de Beaume, said to the doctor : "There is a fine looking fellow, be kind enough to attract his attention ; I cannot show my face on account of the passers by."

M. Bernier opened the window at the very moment that the proposed victim was shouting at the top of his voice—  
“Water !—water !—water !”

“My lad,” said the doctor, “leave your barrel there, and come up here by the Rue de Verneuil, there is some money to be got by it.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### SEBASTIAN ROMAGNÉ.

THE family name of the proposed victim was Romagné, and his godfathers and godmother had him christened Sebastian, but being a native of Frognac-les-Mauriac in the department of Cantal, he always addressed his patron saint as Chebastion ; no doubt he would have written his name thus, but fortunately he was utterly ignorant of the art of chirography.

This child of Auvergne was twenty-three years old, of Herculean build, tall, stout, broad shouldered, bony, thickset, florid, strong as an ox, yet gentle and easy to manage as a little white lamb ; imagine a man cast in the most substantial mould, the most clownish and the most good-natured. He was the eldest of ten children, boys and girls, all living and hearty, swarming under the paternal roof. His father's possessions consisted of a hut, a bit of land, some chestnut trees on the mountain, half-a-dozen pigs—taking the good years with the bad—and two strong arms wherewith to dig the ground. The mother spent her time spinning flax, the little boys helped their father, while the girls took care of the house, and helped to bring up the little ones ; from the eldest to the youngest in rotation.

Young Sebastian never shone, either by his intelligence or his memory, or any other mental gift, but he was overflow-

ing with the milk of human kindness. He had been taught his catechism as a blackbird is taught to whistle a tune, but he always possessed and retained the most Christian sentiments. He never abused his strength, either with man or beast, kept out of quarrels, and very often received a blow without returning it. If the sous-prefet of Mauriac had wished to give him a silver medal, he need only have written to Paris, for Sebastian had saved the lives of several persons at the risk of his own, and on one occasion, had rescued two gendarmes, who would otherwise have perished with their horses in the torrent of the Saumaise. But somehow it seemed to be looked on as quite a matter of course that he should do these things: they came to him by instinct as it were, and there was no more idea of rewarding him than if he had been a Newfoundland dog.

At twenty years of age he had to draw for the conscription; fortunately for himself he drew a lucky number, thanks to a nine days' devotion, which he had performed with the rest of his family. After this, he made up his mind to go to Paris, as so many Auvergnats do, with the hope of earning some money to send his parents. They gave him a new suit of velveteen, and twenty francs, which was thought a large sum in that part of the world, and he went off, taking advantage of the escort of a friend, who knew the road to Paris. He performed the journey on foot in ten days, and arrived fresh and hearty, with his new shoes in his hand, and twelve francs in his pocket.

Two days after he was drawing a water barrel in the Faubourg St. Germain, helping a friend, who was no longer equal to the effort of climbing the stairs, on account of a wrench he had given himself. He received for his trouble board, lodging, and washing at the rate of a shirt a month, to say nothing of a handsome salary of a franc and a half a week for his bachelor pleasures.

At the end of a year, he had saved enough to buy himself a second-hand barrel, and set up on his own account. He succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectations; his simple politeness, his untiring good nature, and his well-known honesty, won him golden opinions in all the neighbourhood. Beginning with the daily ascending and descending of two thousand stairs, he gradually increased to seven thousand, and what was more to the purpose he was able to send home, every month, sixty francs to his people at Frognac. His family held his name in veneration, and always remembered him in their prayers night and morning; the little boys had all new breeches, and it even became a question of sending the two youngest to school.

With all this, their benefactor had in no way changed his mode of life; he slept every night in a shed by the side of his barrel, and four times a year he changed the straw which composed his bed. His velvet suit had more patches than a harlequin's costume; in truth his toilet would have cost him next to nothing had it not been for those confounded shoes, which required at least a pound of nails every month. The expenses of his table were the only ones in which he exercised no economy; he allowed himself without compunction, four pounds of bread a day; sometimes by way of luxury, he regaled his stomach with a piece of cheese, or an onion, or half-a-dozen apples bought from a heap on the Pont Neuf. On Sundays and holidays, he allowed himself soup and meat, and licked his lips in remembrance of it all the rest of the week.

But he was too good a son and a brother ever to think of wine—wine, women, and tobacco were to him fabulous luxuries, which he only knew by report. Still less was he acquainted with theatres, a pleasure so dear to all Parisian workmen. He preferred going to bed gratis at seven o'clock to spending ten sous to be able to applaud M. Dumaine.

Such in mind and body was the man whom M. Bernier hailed in the Rue de Beaume, with the idea of getting him to lend a portion of his skin for M. L'Ambert's benefit.

The people of the house, having been told beforehand, quickly ushered him in. He advanced timidly, hat in hand, raising his feet as high as he possibly could, and hardly daring to let them rest on the carpet; the storm of that morning had splashed him with mud up to his armpits. "Is it water you want?" said he, bowing and addressing himself to the doctor. "I—"

M. Bernier interrupted him. "No, my lad, it has nothing to do with your business."

"Then, sir, it's for some other thing?"

"Quite another thing; this gentleman has had his nose cut off this morning."

"The deuce he has! poor man, who did that?"

"A Turk—but that is of no consequence."

"What a savage! I've always heard it said that the Turks were savages, but I didn't know they were allowed to run loose in Paris. Just wait a minute, and I'll go and fetch the police."

M. Bernier put a stop to this burst of zeal on the part of the worthy Auvergnat, by explaining, in a few words, what was required from him. At first he thought they were making fun of him, for it is quite possible to be a first-rate water-carrier, and yet have no notion of rhinoplasty. The doctor made him understand that they wanted to purchase a month of his time, and about a dozen square inches of his skin. "The operation is nothing," said he, "and you will hardly suffer at all, but I warn you beforehand, you will require an immense amount of patience to remain perfectly quiet, during a whole month, with your arm sewn to this gentleman's nose!"

"Patience," replied he, "I've plenty of that, I was not

born in Auvergne for nothing ; but if I spend a month under this roof in order to oblige the poor gentleman, I shall require to be paid the value of my time."

"Certainly, that is understood ; how much do you want ?"

"Conscientiously, I think it would be worth four francs a day."

"No, my friend," said the notary, "it is worth a thousand francs—forty pounds—for the month."

"No," interrupted the doctor, in a tone of authority, "it is worth two thousand francs."

M. L'Ambert bowed his head and made no objection.

Romagné asked if he might be allowed to finish his day's work, take back his water barrel to the shed, and find a substitute for the month. "After all," said he, "it is hardly worth while beginning now when half the day is gone."

But they gave him to understand that this was a very important case, and he made arrangements accordingly. One of his friends was sent for, who promised to supply his place during his temporary absence.

"You will bring me my bread every day," said Romagné, upon which he was assured that it would be quite unnecessary, as he would be boarded in the house.

"That depends on how much it will cost," observed the prudent Auvergnat.

"Oh, M. L'Ambert will feed you for nothing."

"For nothing ! that suits me down to the ground, here goes—skin me at once !"

He bore the operation like a brave man, not even an eyelid quivered. "It is a pleasure," said he. "I have heard of a countryman of mine, who let himself be petrified in a stream for a franc an hour ; I prefer to be cut up by inches, it is less troublesome, and pays better."

M. Bernier sewed the Auvergnat's left arm to the notary's face, and these two men remained a whole month rivetted to

one another. The Siamese twins, who formerly excited the curiosity of all Europe, were not more closely united. But then they were brothers, accustomed to endure each other from their earliest infancy, and had received the same education. If one had been a water-carrier and the other a notary, they might not always have presented such a charming spectacle of fraternal love!

Romagné never complained of anything, though at first the situation was very strange and novel to him; he obeyed like a slave, or rather a Christian, all the whims of the man who had bought his skin. He got up, sat down, went to bed, turned from right to left, from left to right, according to the will of his lord and master. The magnetic needle is not more true to the North pole than Romagné proved to M. L'Amébert.

This heroic gentleness touched the heart of the notary, which by the way was not a very tender one. For three days he felt a species of gratitude for all the attentions of his victim, but he soon conceived a distaste for him, and finally a perfect horror.

A man, young, active, and in sound health, cannot easily reconcile himself to remain in a state of perfect quiescence, how much more trying then to remain always thus, in the society of an inferior creature, unclean and uneducated? But the die was cast, and he must either live without a nose, or put up with the water-carrier, eat with him, sleep with him, and fulfil with him, in the most inconvenient position, all the necessary functions of life!

Romagné was a worthy, excellent, young fellow, but he snored like a pig—he adored his family, and loved his neighbour, but he hated water, and had never taken a bath in his life for fear of wasting the commodity he dealt in. He had highly delicate sentiments on some points, but the most elementary restraints of civilisation were entirely unknown



to him. Poor M. L'Ambert and poor Romagné ! what nights, what days, what kicks given and received ! It is needless to say Romagné received his without complaining, he was afraid to make the slightest abrupt movement, for fear of spoiling M. Bernier's experiment.

The notary had a great many visitors, and some of his gay friends amused themselves with making sport of the Auvergnat, they taught him to smoke cigars, to drink wine and brandy. The poor devil gave himself up to these new pleasures, with all the ingenuousness of a Red Indian ; they made him tipsy—they made him drunk, and forced him to descend all the steps of the ladder which separates man from the brute creation. It was an education to begin from the very commencement, and these gentlemen took a cruel delight in it. Was it not an agreeable novelty, to demoralise an Auvergnat ? One day they asked him what he intended doing with the two thousand francs he would have earned from M. L'Ambert, when the month was out.

"I shall invest them where I can get five per cent. for them," said he, "and then I shall have an income of one hundred francs."

"And afterwards," asked a young millionaire of twenty-five, "will you be any richer for it, or any happier ? It will bring you in six sous a day, that's all. If you marry, which is certain, for you are a chip of the block from which fools are made, you will have at least a dozen children."

"That is very likely."

"And in obedience to the civil code, which is one of those charming inventions of the Empire, you will leave them each half a sou a day to live on, whilst with two thousand francs, you might live like a nobleman for a month, taste all the pleasures of life, and soar far above your neighbours !"

Poor fellow, he tried to defend himself against these moral temptations, but he received so many repeated taps on his

thick skull, that at last these corrupt notions forced themselves a passage, and took possession of his brain.

Some ladies came also. M. L'Ambert knew many, and of all classes. Romagné assisted at all kinds of scenes. He heard ardent protestations of love and fidelity, which certainly lacked probability. M. L'Ambert, not content with lying in his presence with the most perfect freedom, used often to amuse himself when the two were alone together by exposing to his companion the tissue of deceit which is, so to speak, the canvas on which fashionable life is embroidered.

As to the business world, Romagné felt like Christopher Columbus, his discoveries on this point were so startling. M. L'Ambert's clients put no more restraint on themselves before the water-carrier than if they had been speaking before half-a-dozen oysters. He heard fathers of families trying to rob their sons legally of an inheritance, in favour of a mistress or some ostentatious charity; marriageable young men seeking to find out beforehand how they might defraud their wife of her dowry by the aid of the marriage contract. Money-lenders, who wanted ten per cent. interest on the first mortgage, and borrowers, who wanted to mortgage what did not exist.

Romagné had not much sense, and his uncultivated intelligence was not very superior to that of a spaniel; but his conscience revolted at what he heard, and he thought it right one day to say to M. L'Ambert, "I do not esteem you."

After this, the repugnance the lawyer had always felt for him changed into a decided hatred. The last eight days of their enforced intimacy were one series of storms. But at last M. Bernier decided that the graft had taken root, in spite of tugs without number. The two enemies were severed from each other, and he modelled the notary a nose out of the skin which no longer belonged to Romagné.

The handsome millionaire of the Rue de Verneuil at once flung two bank notes for a thousand francs into the face of his slave, saying—"Here, scoundrel, the money is nothing ; but you have cost me m<sup>o</sup>re than a thousand crowns in patience. Go, get out of this, and let me never hear of you again !"

Romagné thanked him with dignity, drank a bottle of wine in the butler's pantry, two glasses of spirits with Singuet, at the lodge, and then walked off with unsteady gait towards his former place of abode. "

## CHAPTER V.

### GRANDEUR AND DOWNFALL.

M. L'AMBERT's reappearance in society was a great success—I had almost said a glorious one. His seconds bore ample testimony to his courage, declaring that he fought like a lion, and all the old notaries felt themselves young again on the strength of his bravery.

"Yes, indeed ! We show what we are made of if driven to extremities ; being a notary does not make one less a man. Maître L'Ambert had the chances of war against him ; but it is grand to be beaten thus. Quite a second Waterloo. There is good stuff in us yet, let folks say what they will." Thus spoke the respectable Maître Clopineau, and the worthy Maître Labrique, and the unctuous Maître Bontoux, and all the grey-beards of the worshipful company.

The young fellows used very much the same language, with some slight variations inspired by jealousy. "We would not for the world repudiate M. L'Ambert. He is an honour to us, though no doubt, to a certain extent, com-

promising us a little. In similar circumstances we should, one and all, have shown as much courage, and, perhaps, less awkwardness. A ministerial official should never allow himself to be trampled on; but the question arises, should he be the first to put himself in the wrong? No one should fight a duel without legitimate reasons. Were I the father of a family I should certainly prefer to place my affairs in the hands of a prudent man—not a hero of adventures,” &c., &c.

But the opinion of the ladies, which always gives the casting vote, was in favour of the hero of Parthenay. Perhaps it might have been less unanimous had they known the episode of the cat; perhaps even that unjust, and yet charming sex, might have sided against M. L'Ambert if he had allowed himself to appear again on the world's stage without a nose.

But the seconds had kept a discreet silence upon this ridiculous incident, and M. L'Ambert, so far from being disfigured, would seem to have gained by the change. A certain baroness remarked that his countenance had a much more gentle expression since he took to wearing a straight nose.

An old canoness, full of spite, asked the Prince of B—— if he did not soon intend to pick a quarrel himself with the Turk, the prince's aquiline organ enjoying a hyperbolical reputation.

It will be urged, how could women of the world interest themselves in an adventure of which the risk was not incurred on their account? M. L'Ambert's habits were, however, well known, also how much of his time and his heart was frittered away at the Opera; but the world readily forgives these little vagaries to men who do not allow themselves to be entirely engrossed by them. It gets its own share out of the fire, and is thankful for small mercies.

It was counted unto M. L'Ambert as righteousness that he

was only half good for nothing, when so many of his age are wholly so. He frequented the best houses, chatted with the dowagers, danced with the young girls, and, when required, played very passably ; furthermore, his conversation was never horsey.

These merits, tolerably rare among the young millionaires of the faubourg, gained for him the good-will of the ladies. It was even said that some of them thought they were doing a pious action by beguiling him from the pleasures of the green-room. A very pretty devotee, Madame De L—, managed to convince him, for the space of three consecutive months, that the keenest pleasure is not to be found in dissipation and scandal.

For all that, he had never entirely withdrawn himself from the *corps de ballet*, and the severe lesson he had learnt did not inspire him with any horror of this hydra with a hundred pretty heads. One of his first visits was to the green-room, where Mademoiselle Tompain shone in all her glory. There he made a triumphant entry ; every one ran to meet him with the most friendly curiosity. What a shower of "dearest" and "dear old fellow !" what cordial shakes of the hand, what pretty little mouths pursed themselves up to receive a friendly kiss that meant nothing. He was radiant. All his fair-weather friends, all the past-masters of the freemasonry of pleasure complimented him on his wonderful cure. During a whole *entr'acte* he reigned over this agreeable kingdom. They listened to his account of his duel, they made him relate Dr. Bernier's mode of treatment, they even admired the fineness of the stitches in the suture, which was now hardly visible.

"Just imagine," said he, "that excellent Dr. Bernier completed me with the skin of an Auvergnat. And what an Auvergnat, good Lord ! The stupidest, the densest, the dirtiest in all Auvergne. No one would believe it, judging

by the strips of skin he sold me. Ah! the brute made me pass many an unpleasant quarter of an hour! The street messengers are perfect swells compared to him. But at last I am rid of him, thank heaven! The day I paid him, and turned him adrift, I felt as if I had suddenly got rid of a heavy weight. He was called Romagné; a pretty name, forsooth! For pity's sake, never pronounce it in my presence; let no one ever speak to me of Romagné unless they wish to be the death of me—Romagné!"

Mademoiselle Tompain was not the last to congratulate our hero. Ayvaz Boy had shamefully cast her off after having presented her with a sum of money four-times more than she deserved. The handsome notary showed himself tender and forbearing towards her. "I owe you no grudge," said he, "nor do I bear that brave Turk any ill-will. I have only one enemy in the world, and that is a fellow called Romagné."

He pronounced this word Romagné with a comic intonation that made a great hit, and, I am told, even to this day many of the young ladies say "My Romagné" in speaking of their water-carrier.

Three months passed, three lovely summer months. The weather was beautiful; few who could help it remained in Paris. The opera house was invaded by foreigners and provincials. M. L'Ambert was now seldom seen there. Almost every day at six o'clock, throwing off the gravity of the notary, he took himself off to Maisons-Lafitte, where he had rented a villa. His friends came to see him there, even his lady friends. They played in the garden at all kinds of rural games, and, let me tell you, the swing was kept in perpetual motion.

One of his most assiduous and liveliest visitors was the stockbroker, M. Steimbourg. The affair at Parthenay seemed to have drawn them more closely together. M. Steimbourg belonged to a wealthy family of converted Jews. Their

stockbroking business was worth at least two millions of francs, his own share being a quarter of that sum; he was therefore a very eligible friend. The mistresses of the two men agreed as well as might be expected, that is to say, they did not quarrel oftener than once a week! How rarely beautiful to find four hearts that beat as one! The two men rode, read the "Figaro," or retailed the little gossip of the capital. The ladies told each other's fortunes very wittily by the cards in turn. It was a miniature golden age!

M. Steimbourg made a point of presenting his friend to his family. He took him to Bieville, where his father had built himself a château. There M. L'Ambert was kindly received by a hale old man, a lady of fifty, who had not yet abdicated, and two very coquettish young girls. At one glance, he saw that they were not people who vegetated. No, it was a true type of a modern family in full perfection. The father and son were two companions who chaffed each other pleasantly about their little follies. The young girls had seen everything worth seeing at the theatres, and read everything that had been written. Few people knew better than they the ins and outs of Paris society. They had been shown at the Bois de Boulogne celebrated beauties of both worlds, had been taken to all the great sales of their effects, and could descant glibly upon the emeralds of Mademoiselle Z—, or the pearls of Mademoiselle X—. It was Mademoiselle Irma's greatest delight to copy Madame Fargueil's toilettes—her younger sister deputed a friend to find out from Mademoiselle Figeac the name and address of her milliner. They were both rich, and would have good dowries when they married. Irma pleased M. L'Ambert; he felt that a dowry of half a million of francs and a woman who knew how to dress so well were not things to be contemned, and they saw each other very frequently—nearly once a week till the first November frost set in.

After a warm and brilliant autumn, winter came down like an avalanche. This is common enough in our climate, but the strange thing was that M. L'Ambert's nose showed an uncommon degree of sensitiveness. It began by getting rather red, then very much so, next it swelled till, by degrees, it became almost a deformity. After a shooting party, enlivened by a north wind, M. L'Ambert felt a perfectly unbearable irritation. He looked in the glass at the village inn; and the colour of his nose disgusted him; one might have imagined a chi'blain in the wrong place.

He consoled himself, however, with the idea that a bright wood fire would soon restore the natural colour, and, in fact, the heat did soothe and eventually modify the ruddiness of the unfortunate feature. But the itching returned next day, the tissues swelled more than ever, and the redness reappeared, with a slight addition of violet. Eight days spent at home before the fire effaced this fatal tint, but the moment he went out it returned in spite of his silver-fox coat lining. .

This time M. L'Ambert took fright, and sent in haste for M. Bernier. The doctor came, and declared there was a slight inflammation, and ordered a compress of iced water. This eased the nose, but did not effect a cure. M. Bernier was surprised at the persistence of the evil. "After all," said he, "Diëffenbach is perhaps right. He asserts that in such cases the strip of flesh may die from excess of blood, and orders leeches to be applied; let us try."

The notary suspended a leech to the end of his nose, and when it fell off, gorged with blood, it was replaced by another, and so on during two days and two nights. The swelling and discolouration disappeared for a time, but never for very long. Something else must be tried.

M. Bernier asked for twenty-four hours' reflection, and took forty-eight.



When he returned to the house in the Rue de Verneuil he was uneasy, and even nervous. He had to constrain himself by an effort before saying—"Medicine does not account for all natural phenomena, and I am going to submit to you a theory utterly unsupported by science. My brother practitioners would, perhaps, sneer if they heard me say that a strip detached from a man's body may still remain under the influence of its former possessor. It is your own blood, sent from your heart by the action of your brain, which, unfortunately, flies to your nose, and yet I am inclined to believe that idiotic Auvergnat has something to do with it."

M. L'Ambert inveighed loudly. He was horrified to think that a vile mercenary, who had been well paid, and to whom they owed nothing, should be able to exercise an occult influence over the nose of any ministerial official. It was preposterous—an impertinence, in fact.

"It is much worse than that," said the doctor; "it is an absurdity, and yet I must ask your permission to send in search of Romagné. I want to see him this very day, if only to convince me that I am in error. Have you kept his address?"

"Heaven forbid!"

"Never mind. I will try and find him out. Have patience; keep your room; you need do nothing else."

The search lasted fifteen days. The police then came to his assistance, and misled him for three weeks. They unearthed half-a-dozen Romagnés. A cunning detective of great experience ferreted out all the Romagnés of Paris, excepting the one wanted. They discovered a pensioner, a rabbit-skin seller, a barrister, a thief, a draper's assistant, a policeman, and a millionaire.

M. L'Ambert sat before the fire, boiling over with impatience, and despairingly contemplating his scarlet nose.

At last they discovered the water-carrier's abode, but the

bird had flown. His neighbours related how he had made his fortune, and had given up his barrel to go and enjoy life. M. Bernier invaded every wine-shop, and other resort of pleasure, while his patient remained at home plunged in melancholy.

At ten o'clock in the morning of the 2nd of February, while the notary was sorrowfully warming his feet, and furtively squinting at the blooming peony which had developed itself in the centre of his face, a joyful tumult resounded through the house. Doors were opened noisily, servants were heard exclaiming in surprise, and the doctor appeared, leading Romagné by the hand.

It really was Romagné; but oh! how changed! Dirty, besotted, and hideous; with dull eye and fetid breath, reeking of wine and tobacco; red from head to foot as a boiled lobster; he looked less like a man than a living mass of erysipelas.

"Monster!" cried M. Bernier, "you ought to die of shame! You have sunk lower than the brute creation; though you may retain the face of a man, you are no longer the colour of one. How have you employed the little fortune you got from us? You have been rolling in the lowest depths of debauchery, and I found you outside the fortifications of Paris, wallowing like a pig on the threshold of one of the filthiest of wine shops!"

The Auvergnat raised his great eyes to the doctor's face, and replied in his delightful accent, now embellished with the intonation of the faubourgs, "All right; I have been on the spree. Is that any reason for abusing me?"

"Who is abusing you? We are reproaching you for your iniquities, that's all. Why did you not invest your money, instead of drinking it?"

"He told me to amuse myself."

"Scoundrel!" cried the notary; "do you mean to say

that I advised you to go to the barrier and get drunk upon bad brandy and new wine?"

"One amuses oneself as one best can. I was with my friends."

The doctor sprang up with rage. Pretty friends they were!" exclaimed he, "Here I make a wonderful cure which spreads my reputation all over Paris, and which eventually would have opened for me the doors of the Institute, and you choose to go with a lot of drunkards like yourself and spoil my divine handiwork. Were it only a question of yourself, confound you! you might do what you pleased—it would be a moral and physical suicide—but who cares?—an Auvergnat more or less would make no difference to society. But unfortunately it affects a man of the world, a rich man, your benefactor, and my patient! You have compromised, disfigured, murdered him by your misconduct; look at the state to which you have reduced this gentleman's nose."

The poor devil eyed the nose to which he had contributed, and burst into tears. "It is very sad, M. Bernier; but I swear it is not my fault. The nose has gone bad of its own accord; by heavens! I'm an honest man, and I take my oath that I never touched it!"

"Fool!" said M. L'Ambert, "you will never understand, and after all, there is no need that you should. All we want to know is, if you are resolved to turn over a new leaf, and give up this life of dissipation which is killing me by reaction. I warn you that I have a long arm, and if you persist in your vicious courses I will have you put away somewhere."

"In prison?"

"Yes; in prison."

"In prison, with rogues and scoundrels? Oh! spare me, M. L'Ambert, it would be such a disgrace to my family!"

"Will you get drunk any more?—yes, or no?"

"Good heavens! How can I get drunk when I've not a

farthing of money. I've spent all I had, M. L'Ambert. I've drank the whole two thousand francs, my water barrel, everything I possessed ; and now no one on the face of the earth will give me credit."

"So much the better, you scoundrel. Then there will be an end to it."

"I must be steady. There is nothing but starvation now before me, M. L'Ambert."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Oh, M. L'Ambert !"

"What ?"

"If you would be so good as to buy me another water barrel to earn my living, I swear to you I would become quite another man."

"Not a bit of it. You would soon sell it for drink."

"No, M. L'Ambert, on my word, as an honest man."

"Pooh ! the word of a sot."

"Then you are determined I shall die of hunger and thirst ! Just a hundred francs, good M. L'Ambert."

"Not a penny. Providence has brought you to this pass for the sake of restoring my natural countenance. Drink water, eat dry bread, deprive yourself of the necessities of life, die of hunger, if you choose, since by that means I may recover my good looks, and be once more myself."

Romagné bent his head and retired with dragging steps, bowing to the company.

The notary was in an ecstasy of joy, and the doctor in the seventh heaven. "I do not wish to be my own trumpeter," modestly said M. Bernier, "but Leverrier, when he discovered a planet by dint of calculation, did not work a greater miracle than I have done. To be able to guess from the appearance of your nose that an absent Auvergnat, lost in Paris, was giving himself up to all sorts of excess, surely this is tracing effect back to a cause through paths which

human daring has never yet attempted. As to the treatment required by your illness, it is clearly pointed out by circumstances. To diet Romagné is the only remedy that can cure you, and fortune favours us bravely in having reduced this brute to his last penny. You were right to refuse him the assistance he asked, for every effort of the profession would be useless as long as this man had the means of drinking."

"But, doctor," interrupted M. L'Ambert, "supposing this were not the cause of my illness—that you were the plaything of a fortuitous coincidence? Have you not told me yourself that theory—"

"I have said, and I maintain it, that in the present state of our science, your case admits of no logical explanation. The reason of it remains to be proved. But the sympathy that we have discovered between the health of your nose and the conduct of this Auvergnat opens for us, possibly a delusive, but most extensive, vista. Let us wait for a few days, and if your nose improves in proportion as Romagné becomes more steady, then my theory will be strengthened by a new probability. I answer for nothing, but I foresee a physiological law, until now quite unknown to us, which I should be delighted to formulate. The scientific world is full of visible phenomena, produced by unknown causes. Why has Madame L—, whom we both know, a cherry imprinted on her left shoulder? Is it, as is asserted, because her mother, being in an interesting condition, took a violent longing for a basket of cherries in Chevet's window? What invisible artist depicted this fruit on the body of a six weeks' old embryo, about the size of a shrimp? How can we explain this action of the mind upon the body, or tell why this cherry on Madame L.'s shoulder should become sensitive and painful in the month of April in each year, when cherry trees are in blossom? These are certain, evident, and palp-

able facts, but as inexplicable as the swelling and redness of your nose. Have patience !”

Two days after this, the swelling on M. L'Ambert's nose had visibly subsided, though the redness still obstinately remained. By the end of the week it was reduced a full third in size, and after the expiration of a fortnight the skin peeled off, a new skin formed, and the nose resumed its natural shape and colour.

The doctor was triumphant. “My only regret,” said he, “is that we did not keep Romagné caged up, so that we might have observed if he passed through the same changes as yourself. I am certain that for a week he was covered with scales like a serpent.”

“Let him go to the devil,” charitably added M. L'Ambert.

From this day the notary resumed his former habits : rode, drove, walked, danced at all the balls of the faubourg, and embellished, by his presence, the crush-room of the Opera. All the women welcomed his return—those in good society, and those out of it. One of those who congratulated him most tenderly on his restoration to health was the eldest sister of his friend, M. Steimbourg.

This charming person had a way of looking men straight in the face, and she soon discovered that M. L'Ambert had emerged from this last crisis handsomer than ever. Yes, really it seemed as if these two or three months of suffering had added something hitherto wanting to his expression. His nose especially ; that straight nose, which had resumed its pristine form after such an agonising dilation, seemed more refined, whiter, and more aristocratic than ever.

This was also the opinion of the handsome notary, and he gazed at himself in all the looking glasses, with an ever increasing admiration ; it was very amusing to see him face to face with himself, smiling at his own nose.

But at the beginning of spring, about the middle of March,

when the generous sap was swelling the budding shoots of the lilac trees, M. L'Ambert began to think that his nose alone was deprived of the benefits of the season, and the blessings of nature. In the midst of the general regeneration it withered and paled like an autumn leaf—the thin nostrils, as if dried up by an invisible sirocco, flattened themselves against the cartilage.

"Zounds," said the notary, making a grimace in the glass. "Refinement, like virtue, is a good thing, but one can have too much of it. My nose is assuming an alarming elegance, and soon there will be only the shadow of it left, unless I can restore its life and colour!"

He tried a little rouge, but this only threw out into greater relief the straight, thin line which divided his face in two; exactly like the blade of fine steel, which rears itself sharply in the centre of a sun-dial, was this fantastic nose of the unfortunate notary.

In vain did the wealthy owner of the house in the Rue de Verneuil put himself upon a most substantial regimen, thinking that good food, digested by a sound stomach, would have a beneficial effect on every portion of his body. He imposed upon himself the agreeable task of consuming a quantity of rich soups, strong jelly, and underdone meat, washed down with the most generous wines. To say that these choice viands were of no good at all, would be to deny the evidence of one's senses, and to speak disparagingly of good cheer. M. L'Ambert, in a very short time, had a fine pair of red cheeks, a throat like an apoplectic bull, and a decided corporation. But his nose was like a neglectful partner, too careless or too disinterested to claim what was his due.

When a patient is too ill to eat or drink, he is sometimes sustained by nourishing baths, which penetrate through the pores of the skin to the sources of life. M. L'Ambert treated his nose like an invalid who requires a special regimen at any

cost. He ordered on its sole behoof a little silver vessel, and six times a day he immersed it and kept it patiently in baths of milk, Burgundy, broth, and even tomato sauce. All was labour in vain, the invalid emerged from them as white, as thin, as deplorable as he had gone in.

All hope seemed lost, when one day M. Bernier, striking his forehead, exclaimed—"We have committed a tremendous fault, a regular school-boy's blunder, and it is I who have been guilty of it at the very moment when my theory had received such a startling confirmation. There can be no doubt about it, the Auvergnat is ill, and it is he whom we must treat to cure you."

Poor M. L'Ambert tore his hair. Now, indeed, he regretted that he had turned Romagné out of doors, and refused him assistance; above all, that he had forgotten to ask his address. He pictured to himself the poor devil lying sick on a miserable bed without bread, without roast beef, and without Château Margaux. At this thought, his heart was touched, he identified himself with the sufferings of the poor hireling, and for the first time in his life he felt some compassion for a fellow creature's woe.

"Doctor, dear doctor," he exclaimed, pressing M. Bernier's hand, "I would give all I possess to save that poor young man!"

Five days later, the evil had increased, the nose was nothing but so much flexible skin, bending beneath the weight of the notary's spectacles, when M. Bernier came to say he had discovered the Auvergnat.

"Victory," cried M. L'Ambert.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders, and replied, "that the victory at that moment seemed to him rather doubtful." "My theory," continued he, "is fully confirmed, and in my capacity of a physiologist, I ought to be satisfied, but as your doctor, I am anxious to cure you, and the state in which I



have found that unfortunate fellow gives me little or no hope."

"But you will save him, dear doctor?"

"To begin with, he no longer belongs to me, he is now the property of a fellow practitioner, who is studying his case with the greatest curiosity."

"But he can be handed over to you; we will even buy him if necessary."

"Of what are you dreaming? A doctor does not sell his patients: he kills them sometimes in the interests of science, to see what their bodies will disclose, but to make it a trading matter, oh, never! My friend Fogatier may perhaps give me your Auvergnat, but the rascal is very ill, and to crown all, he has taken such a disgust to life that he will not try to get well; he rejects all his medicines. With regard to his food, sometimes he complains he has not enough, at others he refuses what is given him, and asks to be allowed to die."

"But that is a crime. I will speak to him, I will compel him to listen to the language of morality and religion. Where is he?"

"At the Hôtel Dieu, ward St. Paul, No. 10."

"Have you your carriage below?"

"Yes."

"Very well, let us go; what a scoundrel to wish to die; he is not then aware that all men are brothers!"

## CHAPTER VI.

THE HISTORY OF A PAIR OF SPECTACLES AND THE CONSEQUENCES  
OF A COLD IN THE HEAD.

NEVER did preacher in this world, Bossuet, Fenelon, Massillon or Flécher—never even did M. Mermilliod himself—pour forth from the pulpit more powerful or more persuasive eloquence, than that expended by M. L'Ambert at the bedside of Romagné. First he appealed to the reason, then to the conscience, and last of all to the heart of his patient; he had recourse to arguments, both sacred and profane, quoted texts alike from the Bible and philosophers, was powerful and gentle, severe and fatherly, logical, coaxing, nay even at times jocose. He proved to him that suicide is the most disgraceful of all crimes, and that one must be very cowardly to kill oneself intentionally. He even tried a metaphor, as original as it was bold, comparing a self-murderer to the deserter who abandons his post, without permission from his corporal.

The Auvergnat, who had taken nothing for twenty-four hours, appeared wedded to his idea. He remained as immovable and obstinate in the face of death, as an ass standing before a bridge. To the most pressing arguments, he replied with a gentle impassibility—"Oh, it's not worth while, M. L'Ambert; there is so much poverty in the world."

"But my friend, my poor friend, poverty is an institution sent direct from heaven. It is expressly permitted, in order to teach charity to the rich, and resignation to the poor."

"The rich! I tried to get work, and every one refused it

to me; I asked for charity, and was threatened with the police."

"Why did you not seek out your friends?—myself for instance, I who wish you well, I who have your blood in my veins?"

"Very likely, for you to have me kicked out of doors again!"

"My door shall always be open to you, my purse, and my heart likewise."

"Oh, if you had only given me those fifty francs, to buy the second-hand barrel."

"But you idiot—you dear old idiot, I mean—I may be allowed to speak a little roughly, as I used to do when you shared my bed and board. It is not only fifty francs that I would give you, but a thousand, two thousand, ten thousand, it is my whole fortune I wish to share with you—in proportion to our respective wants. You must live, you must be happy; here is the spring returning with its accompanying pageant of flowers, and the soft warbling of the birds in the trees. Can you have the heart to leave all this behind? Think of the sorrow of your poor relations, of your old father, living in the hopes of seeing you once more in your native country, of your brothers and sisters; think of your mother, my friend, who would never survive your loss! You shall see them all again, or rather, on second thoughts, you must remain in Paris under my own eye, within my reach. I must see to your happiness, you shall marry a nice little wife, and be the father of two or three fine handsome children; ah, you smile! Take this soup."

"Many thanks, M. L'Ambert; keep the soup, I shall not want any again, there is too much misery in the world."

"But when I tell you that your days of poverty are at an end, I take upon myself to insure your future, on my honour as a notary. If you will only consent to live, you shall suffer

no more, you shall work no more, your year shall consist of three hundred and sixty-five Sundays."

"What, and no Mondays?"

"Of Mondays, if you prefer them; you shall eat, drink, and smoke cabânos, worth thirty sous a piece! You shall be my guest, my inseparable companion—my second self in fact. Will you live for that, Romagné?"

"No; so much the worse! As I have begun to die, I may as well finish at once."

"Oh, is that it? well then, I will tell you, triple distilled beast that you are, to what a destiny you are hastening. It is not only a question of eternal punishment that your obstinacy is bringing nearer and nearer to you, but in this world, here even, to-morrow—nay, perhaps to-day—before being left to rot in the pauper's grave, you will be carried to some dissecting-room, where they will throw your body on a stone slab, and cut it up into pieces. One Sawbones will split your mule's head with an axe, another will lay open your chest with repeated strokes of the scalpel, to find out if there be a heart inside this dense covering; another—"

"Have pity! oh, have pity, M. L'Ambert. I do not wish to be cut in pieces, I would rather take the soup!"

Three days of soup and his naturally strong constitution saved Romagné from his very ticklish position. He was then able to be conveyed, in a carriage, to the Rue de Verneuil, where M. L'Ambert himself assisted at his installation with almost maternal solicitude. He gave up to him the room of his own valet so that the Auvergnat might be nearer himself. During a month he performed all the functions of a sick nurse, even sitting up for several nights.

This fatigue, instead of impairing his health, seemed to restore the freshness and beauty of his complexion. The more he exerted himself to nurse the poor devil, the healthier and handsomer his nose became. His time was divided

between the office, the Auvergnat, and the looking-glass. It was about this time, that he wrote one day in a fit of abstraction, on the rough copy of a deed of sale—"how sweet it is to do good!" a saying rather old in itself, but apparently new to him.

When Romagné was decidedly convalescent, his host and his preserver, who had cut so many sippets of bread, and carved so many beefsteaks for him, said—"From this day forth we will dine together every day, but if you think you would prefer your meals with the servants, you will be just as well fed, and perhaps more amused."

Romagné, like a sensible man, decided to dine with the servants. He fell in with their ways, and the manner in which he conducted himself among them won all hearts. Instead of putting on airs on account of the friendliness of the master, no little scullion was more modest or gentle. M. L'Ambert had simply given his servants some one to wait on them: every one made use of him, laughed at his peculiar accent, and gave him friendly smacks on the back, but no one thought of paying his wages. M. L'Ambert often found him carrying water, moving heavy pieces of furniture, or polishing the floors; on such occasions this good master used to take him by the ear, saying,—“Amuse yourself if you will, but don't over fatigue yourself.”

At this the poor fellow, overwhelmed with so much kindness, would retire to his room to weep tears of gratitude. He was not able to keep this nice clean room close to M. L'Ambert very long; his master hinted to him very delicately one day how much he missed his valet; and Romagné asked to be allowed to occupy one of the garrets! His request was granted, and he was given a sort of dog-hole, which hitherto no kitchen-maid had ever been induced to occupy.

Some wise man has said, “Happy the people without a history.” Sebastian Romagné was happy for three months.

At the beginning of June, he had a history—his heart, so long invulnerable, was attacked by Cupid's darts. The *ci-devant* water-carrier gave himself up hand and foot to the god who lost Troy. While peeling vegetables in the kitchen, he became aware that the cook had pretty little grey eyes, and plump red cheeks. A sigh, heavy enough to upset the table, was the first symptom of the attack. He tried to explain himself, but the words died away in his throat; he hardly dared take his Dulcinea by the waist, and imprint an impassioned kiss upon her lips, so great was his timidity.

At the first word the cook understood him; she was a capable person, seven or eight years older than himself, and better versed in the art of love. "I see what it is," said she, "you wish to marry me; very well, my lad, we can come to terms, I daresay, provided you possess everything that is necessary for a husband."

He replied naïvely enough, that he had every requisite, that is to say, a pair of strong arms well accustomed to work. Mademoiselle Jenny laughed in his face, and spoke out more clearly; when, bursting with laughter, in his turn, he replied—"If you mean money, why did you not say so at once? I have any amount, only say how much you want, name the sum—would half of M. L'Ambert's fortune be enough?"

"The half of master's fortune!"

"Certainly, he has told me scores of times I am to have the half of his fortune, but we have not yet made the division; he is keeping my share."

"Rubbish!"

"Rubbish! look, he has just come in; I will go and ask him for my due, and will bring the bag of coppers into the kitchen."

Poor innocent! he received from his master a good lesson in high social grammar. M. L'Ambert soon taught him that to promise and perform are not synonymous terms. He also

condescended to explain to him (for he happened to be in a very good humour) the merits of the figure of speech called hyperbole. At last he said to him, with a gentle firmness that admitted of no reply—"Romagné, I have done a great deal for you; I will do still more. I will send you away from this house. Your own good sense must tell you that you cannot be master here, and I am too kind to let you stay on as a servant. I think I should be doing you an injustice were I to allow you to remain in an indefinite position, which would upset your usual habits, and give you false ideas. Another year of this idle life of a parasite would make you lose all taste for work, and you would fall out of your sphere; and, I must tell you, the unclassed are the scourge of our day. Lay your hand upon your heart, and tell me honestly, could you ever consent to become a pest to society? Poor miserable creature, have you not already, and more than once, regretted that title of workman, your patent of nobility? For you are one of those created by God to be ennobled by your own hard work; you belong to the aristocracy of labour. Work then, not as formerly, in the midst of privation and uncertainty, but in a security which I will guarantee you, and an abundance proportionate to your modest wants. I will pay all the expenses of the first outlay, and will procure you work. If, by any chance, the means of subsistence should fail, you will find something to fall back upon at my house. But give up this insane idea of marrying my cook; you ought not to link your fate with a servant, and, for my part, I will have no children about the house!"

The unfortunate man cried his eyes out, but expressed his grateful thanks. To give M. L'Ambert his due, he did the thing fairly well. Romagné was rigged out in everything new. A room on the fifth story was furnished for him in an old house in the Rue du Cherche-Midi, and five hundred

francs were given him to live upon until work could be found. Before a week was over, M. L'Ambert obtained him a place at a celebrated looking-glass warehouse in the Rue de Sèvres.

Nearly six months passed, and during this time the notary's nose never once reminded him of its provider. But one day when this ministerial servant, in company with his head clerk, was deciphering some parchments belonging to an old and noble family, his gold spectacles broke in two, and fell upon the table.

This little accident did not disturb him much. He had recourse to a double eye-glass with steel springs, and sent his spectacles to be changed on the Quai d'Orfèvres. M. Luna, his optician in ordinary, hastened to send a thousand apologies with a new pair of spectacles, which, in the course of twenty-four hours, broke in exactly the same place as the others. A third pair met with a similar fate, and a fourth broke in precisely the same way.

The optician, at his wits' end, knew not what further excuse to make. At the bottom of his heart, he was convinced that M. L'Ambert was to blame. He said to his wife, showing her the mischief of the previous four days—"This young man is not reasonable, he wears No. 4 glasses, which are necessarily very heavy; but from dandyism, he insists on their setting being as fine as wire, and I feel sure he uses his spectacles as roughly as if they were made of wrought iron. If I tell him he will be angry, but I mean to send him something rather stronger in the framework."

Madame Luna thought this an excellent idea, but for all that the fifth pair of spectacles were as unlucky as the other four. This time M. L'Ambert did get angry, though no observation had been made, and he transferred his custom to a rival house.

But one would have imagined that all the opticians in



Paris had conspired to break their spectacles over the unfortunate notary's nose. At least a dozen pairs were tried, and the most extraordinary thing of all was that the eyeglasses with steel springs, which always came into play during each interregnum, remained as firm and strong as ever.

We know that patience was not M. L'Ambert's crowning virtue. One day he was stamping on a pair of spectacles, and crushing them under his feet, when M. Bernier was announced. "By Jove!" said the notary, "you have come in the nick of time. I am bewitched; the *doucc* take me."

The doctor's eye, naturally enough, turned at once to his patient's nose, it looked healthy, in good condition, and fresh as a rose. "It seems to me," said he, "that we are doing very well."

"I—no doubt, but these confounded spectacles won't do at all."

Thereupon he related his adventures, and M. Bernier became plunged in reflection. "The Auvergnat is mixed up in this," said he at last; "have you a broken frame by you?"

"There is one under my feet."

M. Bernier picked it up, and after having examined it through a magnifying glass, he fancied he saw that the gold looked as if silvered at the broken edges. "The *deuce*!" said he, "has Romagné been at his old tricks again?"

"What tricks do you mean?"

"Is he still under your roof?"

"No, the rascal has left; he is at work in town."

"I hope this time you have taken his address?"

"Naturally; do you wish to see him?"

"The sooner the better."

"There is, then, some danger pending? nevertheless, I am very well."

"First of all let us go and find Romagné."

A quarter of an hour after, these gentlemen alighted at

the door of Messrs. Taillade and Co., Rue de Sèvres. A grand sign of cut glass indicated the sort of work carried on within.

"Here we are," said the notary.

"What ! our man is employed here ?"

"Most certainly ; I got him the place myself."

"All right, there is less harm done than I thought ; but all the same, you have been guilty of a great imprudence.

"What do you mean ?"

"Before I explain myself, let us go in."

The first person they saw on entering the workshop was the Auvergnat with his shirt sleeves rolled up, silvering a mirror.

"Ah !" said the doctor, "I guessed rightly."

"What do you mean, doctor ?"

"They silver mirrors with a layer of mercury, confined under a sheet of tin foil ; do you understand ?"

"Not exactly."

"That animal of yours is covered with it up to his elbows—what am I saying?—up to his armpits would be nearer the mark."

"Still, I do not see the connection."

"You can't see that your nose, being a portion of his arm, and gold having a deplorable tendency always to amalgamate with mercury, it would be perfectly impossible for you to preserve your spectacles ?"

"By Jove !"

"But you have still the alternative of wearing steel spectacles."

"I don't like them."

"Well, after all, you incur no risk, except, perhaps, a few mercurial accidents."

"Ah ! but no. I would rather that Romagné did something else. Here, Romagné ! Leave your work, and come

away quickly with us ! Will you leave off, you brute ? You don't know the danger to which you are exposing me !”

The master of the shop had been drawn to the spot by the noise. M. L'Ambert announced himself with an air of importance, and reminded him that he had himself recommended this man through his upholsterer.

M. Taillade replied that he remembered the circumstance perfectly ; it was to make himself agreeable to M. L'Ambert, and to win his patronage, that he had promoted the new hand to the rank of silverer.

“ Within the last fortnight ? ” exclaimed M. L'Ambert.

“ Yes, sir ; did you already know it ? ”

“ I know it only too well. Oh, sir, how can one trifle with things so sacred ? ”

“ I have—”

“ No, nothing. But out of regard for me—for yourself—for society in general—put him back again where he was ; or rather no, give him back to me, and let me take him away. I will pay all that is necessary ; but let there be no delay. It is the doctor's orders. Romagné, my friend, follow me ; your fortune is made ; everything I have is yours ! Not that exactly, but come all the same. You shall have every reason to be satisfied with me.”

He hardly gave Romagné time to clothe himself, and carried him off like a prize.

M. Taillade and his workmen thought the notary mad. The poor victim raised his eyes to heaven, and as they walked along wondered what was wanted of him now. His future was discussed in the carriage, while he sat open-mouthed by the side of the coachman.

“ My dear patient,” said the doctor to the millionaire, “ you must never lose sight of that fellow. I can quite understand your sending him out of your house, for he is not the most agreeable inmate in the world ; but you should not

have allowed him to go so far, nor have remained so long without news of him. Let him lodge in the Rue de Beaume, or the Rue de l'Université, close to your house. Give him an occupation less dangerous to yourself, or rather, if you would act for the best, give him a little pension, and let him do nothing. If he works he will fatigue and expose himself. Indeed I don't know of any trade where a man does not run some risk, an accident happens so easily. Give him enough to live upon without having to work ; but be careful not to give him too much ; he would only drink again, and you know what would happen to you then. A hundred francs a month, and his rent paid ; that is all he requires."

"It is, perhaps, too much. Not on account of the money ; but I wish him to have only enough to buy food ; nothing for drink."

"Well, then, give him four louis, one every Tuesday in each week."

They offered Romagné a pension of eighty francs a month ; but for once he was obstinate. "What, all that ?" said he, scornfully. "It was hardly worth while to take me from the Rue de Sèvres. I had three francs ten sous a day, and I was able to send money to my family. Let me work at the mirrors again, or give me three francs ten sous." And they were obliged to give it to him, seeing he was master of the situation.

M. L'Ambert soon found out that he had taken a wise step. A year passed over without an accident of any kind. Romagné was paid every week, and was under daily surveillance. He lived honestly and quietly, without any dissipation except for a game at nine-pins. And Mademoiselle Irma Steimbourg's handsome eyes rested with visible complacency upon the pink and white nose of the happy millionaire.

These two young people danced every cotillon together throughout the winter, and people began to talk and say it would be a match.

One night, on leaving the opera house, the old Marquis de Villemaurin stopped M. L'Ambert under the portico. "Well," said he, "when is the wedding to come off?"

"But, marquis, I have heard nothing about it yet."

"What, are you waiting till they ask you in marriage? By Jove, it's the man's place to speak first. The little Duke de Lignaut, a real gentleman and a right good fellow, did not wait till I offered him my daughter. He came, he gave satisfaction, and everything was settled; in eight days we sign the marriage contract. You understand, my dear fellow, this is your affair. Just wait till I see these ladies into their carriage, and then we can walk together to the club. But put on your hat, I beg of you. I did not notice you were uncovered. It is enough to give you your death of cold."

The old man and the young one walked side by side as far as the boulevard, one talking, the other listening. And M. L'Ambert went home to draw up from memory the marriage contract of Mademoiselle Charlotte Auguste de Villemaurin; but in the meantime, there was no denying, he had caught a very severe cold. The deed was drafted by the head clerk, looked over by the respective lawyers of the betrothed parties, and finally copied out on stamped paper, nothing more being needed but the signatures.

On the day appointed, M. L'Ambert, a slave to duty, took himself to the Hôtel de Villemaurin, notwithstanding a catarrh that made his eyes start out of his head. For the last time he blew his nose in the ante-chamber, and the lackeys all started off their seats as if they had heard the trump of doom.

M. L'Ambert was announced. He wore his gold spectacles, and smiled gravely, as became the situation.

With well-tied cravat, well-gloved hands, his feet in thin pumps, his hat under his arm, the contract in his right hand,

he advanced to pay his respects to the marchioness ; and entering the circle which surrounded her, bent before her, saying, in a strong Auvergnese accent, "Marchioness, I have brought your daughter's marriage contract."

Madame de Villemaurin raised two large, astonished eyes to his face, while a slight murmur ran through the assembly.

M. L'Ambert bowed again, exclaiming—"Ah ! marchioness, this is a memorable day for the young lady !"

A vigorous hand seized him by the left arm and turned him round with a pirouette. He recognised the powerful grip of the marquis. "My dear notary," said the old man, dragging him into a corner, "this carnival time permits many a licence ; but you should remember where you are and change your tone, I beg of you."

"But, marquis—"

"What, again ! You see I am patient, but don't carry it any further ; go and make your excuses to the marchioness, read us over the contract, and say good-night."

"But why excuses, and why good-night ? One would imagine I had done something not correct."

The marquis said no more, but made a sign to one of the footmen going through the drawing-room, upon which the door opened, and a voice in the ante-chamber was heard calling out—"M. L'Ambert's carriage."

Giddy, confused, beside himself, the poor millionaire bowed himself out, eventually finding himself in his carriage, without in the least knowing how or why. He struck his forehead, tore his hair, pinched his arms, to make sure he was awake, fancying he must be the victim of some nightmare. But no, he was not asleep ; he saw the time by his watch ; he read the names of the streets by the gas light ; he recognised the different signs of the shops. What had he said ?—what had he done ? What rules of decorum had he violated ?—what awkwardness, what folly had he committed to bring

this treatment upon himself? for one thing was quite certain, he had been turned out of M. de Villemaurin's house. And the marriage contract was there in his hand; that contract drawn up with so much care, in such good style, and which they had not even heard read!

He found himself in his own courtyard, without having arrived at a solution of the problem. The sight of his porter inspired him with a bright idea. "Singuet," said he.

Little Singuet made haste to come forward.

"Singuet, I will give you a hundred francs if you will sincerely tell me the truth, and a hundred kicks on your carcase if you conceal anything from me."

Singuet looked at him with surprise, and smiled timidly.

"You smile, hard-hearted wretch! Why do you smile? Tell me at once."

"Really, sir," said the poor devil, "I hardly dare,—you will excuse me, sir, but you imitate Romagné's accent to a T."

"Romagné's accent! I—I speak like Romagné—like an Auvergnat?"

"You must be well aware of it, sir, you have been speaking so for a week past."

"No—confound it, I was not aware of it!"

Singuet raised his eyes to heaven; he thought his master had gone mad. But M. L'Ambert, apart from this confounded accent, was in full possession of his faculties. He questioned his servants, one after the other, and at last became convinced of his misfortune. "Ah, that rascal of a water-carrier," cried he. "I am sure he has been up to some of his tricks; let him be found, or rather—no, I will go myself, and give him a good shaking."

He ran on foot to his pensioner's house, climbed up the five storeys, knocked, but did not awaken him, and in a frenzy of rage and impatience, burst open the door.

"Monsieur L'Ambert!" cried Romagné.

"Scoundrel of an Auvergnat," answered the notary.

"Dash it!"

"Dash it!"

They both seemed to be of one mind in murdering the French language; their discussion lasted a good quarter of an hour, in the purest Auvergnese, without in the least clearing up the mystery. One complained bitterly as a victim, the other defended himself with all the eloquence of an innocent man.

"Wait for me here," said M. L'Ambert, in conclusion. "M. Bernier, the doctor, will tell me this very night what you have been doing."

He woke up M. Bernier, and related to him in the choicest Auvergnese accent the events of the evening. The doctor began to laugh.

"Much ado about nothing; Romagné is innocent, and you have only yourself to blame. You stood barchheaded outside the opera house, and all the evil has arisen from that. You have caught a cold; that makes you speak through your nose. Your nose is an Auvergnat nose; consequently you talk like an Auvergnat; that's logic. Go home, inhale some aconite, keep your feet warm, cover your head, and take every precaution against influenza, for now you know how much hinges upon your nose."

The unhappy man returned to his house, grumbling like the very deuce. "So," said he, aloud, "all my precautions count for nothing. In vain I lodge, feed, and watch this water-carrier; he will always be playing me some tricks, and I shall constantly be his victim, without being able to accuse him. Of what use is all this expense? I shall at least save his pension!"

No sooner said than done; next day, when poor Romagné, still bewildered, came to receive his week's allowance, Singuet shut the door upon him, telling him he was no



longer wanted there. He philosophically shrugged his shoulders, like a man who, not having read Horace, by instinct practises the *nil admirari*. Singuet, who still took an interest in him, asked what he intended doing. He replied that he should look out for work with all the more pleasure, as this enforced idleness had weighed heavily upon him for some time past.

M. L'Ambert got cured of his influenza, and congratulated himself upon having effaced from his budget the article Romagné.

No further accident happened to interrupt his happiness ; he made his peace with the Marquis de Villenœurin, and with his clients of the faubourg, who had all been more or less scandalised. Free from all anxiety, he was able to give himself up unrestrainedly to the tender passion inspired by Mademoiselle Steinbourg's dowry. Happy L'Ambert ! he opened wide the door of his heart and displayed the chaste and honest sentiments it contained.

The lovely and prudent young girl gave her hand, English fashion, and said—"It is a settled thing, my parents agree with me. I will give you the necessary instructions for my wedding presents. Let us try to shorten all formalities so as to be able to go to Italy before the end of the winter."

Love lent him wings : he purchased the wedding presents without any bargaining, put the apartments destined for madame into the hands of his upholsterer, ordered a new carriage, chose a pair of thorough-breds of exquisite beauty, and hastened the publication of the banns. The farewell dinner he gave his bachelor friends is inscribed in the archives of the Café Anglais. His favourites received his adieux and his bracelets with restrained emotion.

Letters of invitation announced that the nuptial benediction would be given at St. Thomas d'Aquin, on the 3rd of

March, at one o'clock precisely. Is it necessary to add, that they had the high altar and all the paraphernalia of a first-class marriage? On the 3rd of March, at eight o'clock, M. L'Ambert awoke without being called, smiled at the first beams of a fine day, took his handkerchief from under his pillow, and raised it to his nose, with a view of clearing his head, but his nose was no longer there, and the cambric handkerchief encountered in lieu thereof an empty void.

With one bound, the notary found himself before the looking glass. Horror and malediction! (as they say in the romances of the old school) he saw himself in the same mutilated condition as when he first returned from Parthenay. To run to his bed, search among the sheets and blankets, explore the bedstead, examine the mattress and bolster, shake the neighbouring furniture, and upset everything in the room, was, as you may suppose, the affair of a few seconds.

"Nothing! nothing! nothing!"

He hung on to the bell rope, called all his servants to the rescue, and threatened to kick them all out, if the nose was not found. Useless threat! the nose was as difficult to find as the Legislative Assembly of 1816.

Two agitated hours passed thus in disorder and noise. Steimbourg, the father, had already put on his blue coat with gilt buttons; Mademoiselle Steimbourg, resplendent in a wedding garment, superintended the movements of two ladies' maids, and three dress-makers, who flitted about the lovely Irma. The fair bride, covered with rice powder, like a gudgeon ready for frying, stamped her feet with impatience, abusing every one with admirable impartiality. The mayor of the tenth arrondissement, girt with his official scarf, walked up and down the large empty hall, preparing a little impromptu speech. The privileged beggars of St. Thomas d'Aquin occupied themselves in chasing away some intruders,

come from heaven knows where, to dispute the spoils with them. M. Henry Steimbourg, who had been chewing the end of a cigar for the last half hour in his father's study, began to wonder at the non-arrival of his friend M. L'Ambert.

At last, losing all patience, he ran to the Rue de Sartines, and there found his future brother-in-law bathed in tears ! What could he say to console him under such a misfortune ? He walked several times round and round him, repeating "by Jove !" He made him relate the fatal catastrophe twice over, and interlarded the narration with some philosophical remarks of his own.

That confounded doctor was not yet forthcoming, though they had sent to say the case was urgent, sent to his home, to the hospitals and everywhere. At last, however, he arrived, and at once jumped to the conclusion that Romagné must be dead.

"I thought as much," said the notary, whose tears redoubled, "rascally brute of a Romagné." This was the funeral oration of the poor Auvergnat !

• "And now, doctor, what is to be done ?"

"We must find another Romagné, and begin the whole thing over again, but you know by experience the disadvantages of that system, and if you will be advised by me, you will try the Indian method this time."

"What, the skin of my forehead ? never, a silver nose would be better than that."

"They make very elegant ones now-a-days," said the doctor.

"It remains to be seen if Mademoiselle Irma Steimbourg will consent to marry an invalid with a silver nose. Henry, my good fellow, what do you say ?"

Henry Steimbourg shook his head, and said nothing. He would carry the news to his family, and learn the young

lady's wishes. That amiable person behaved like a heroine, when she learnt the misfortune of her betrothed.

"Do you think," said she, "that I am only marrying him for his beauty? at that rate I should have taken my cousin Rodrigo, Master in the Court of Appeal. Rodrigo was not so rich, but much handsomer! I gave my hand to M. L'Ambert, because he was a gentleman of good position—because his character, his house, his horses, his mind, his dress, everything, in fact about him pleased me; besides, here I am dressed for the occasion; if my marriage falls through, I shall lose my reputation. Let us hasten to his house, mother. I will take him as he is."

But when she found herself face to face with the disfigured object, this grand enthusiasm quickly died out, and she fainted. They soon brought her round, but only to burst into tears; in the midst of her sobs, they heard a cry which seemed to come from the depths of her soul—"Oh, Rodrigo," cried she, "I have been very unjust to you."

M. L'Ambert remained a bachelor, he had a silver nose made, and resigned his office to his head clerk. There was a very pretty little house for sale near the Hôtel des Invalides, and he bought it. Many of his friends and boon companions enlivened his solitude; he had a famous cellar, and consoled himself as best he might. The finest bottles of Chateau-Yquem, the best vintages of Clos Vougeot are his; sometimes he says jestingly—"I have an advantage over other men, I can drink as much as I please without fear of making my nose red."

He has remained faithful to his politics and reads all the good papers. The pleasure of accumulating money procures him a kind of gentle intoxication. His life is spent between two wines and two millions.

One evening last week, as he was walking slowly, stick in hand, along the Rue Eblé, he uttered a cry of surprise.

Romagné's ghost, dressed in blue corduroy, stood before him !

Was it really a ghost ? Ghosts carry nothing, and this one carried a trunk upon his back.

"Romagné !" exclaimed the notary.

"Good evening, Monsieur L'Ambert."

"You speak ; then you must be alive ?"

"Certainly, I am alive."

"Miserable wretch, what then have you done with my nose ?"

While speaking he had seized him by the collar, and was shaking him with all his might. The Auvergnat released himself with some difficulty, and said—"Let me alone, I can't defend myself, don't you see that I have lost an arm ? When you stopped my allowance, I went into a factory, and got my arm crushed in the machinery !"

# THE MARCHIONESS'S MOTHER.

## CHAPTER I.

ON April 15th, 1846, the following advertisement appeared in the principal Parisian newspapers :

“A young man of good family, late pupil of a government school, having studied mining, smelting, book-keeping and forestry, for ten years, wishes to meet with an honourable employment in his speciality. Write to M. L. M. D. O. poste restante, Paris.”

Madame Benoît, the owner of the fine forges of Arlange, was then at Paris, in her small hôtel of the Rue Saint-Dominique ; but she never read the papers. Why should she have read them ? She was not in need of a manager for her forges, but of a husband for her daughter. Madame Benoît, whose temper and face became much altered in subsequent years, was at that time a very amiable person. She was in the enjoyment of that second youth which nature does not grant to every woman, and which extends between the fortieth and fiftieth year. Her slightly majestic embonpoint gave her the appearance of a full-blown blossom, but no one on seeing her would think of a faded flower. Her small eyes sparkled with the same fire as at twenty ; her hair had not whitened ; her teeth had not lengthened ; her cheeks and double chin were resplendent with that vigorous freshness, glossy and downless, which distinguishes the second

youth from the first. Her arms and shoulders would have excited the envy of many young women. Her feet had become slightly crushed under a hundred weight and a half, but her little hand, pink and plump, still glittered in the midst of rings and bracelets like a jewel amongst jewels.

The inward attractions of so accomplished a person were the exact counterpart of her outward ones. Madame Benoît's mind was as bright as her eyes. Her face was not more glowing than her disposition. Smiles never left her lovely mouth; her pretty little hands were ever ready to give. She seemed made of good temper and kindness. Madame Benoît used to say to those who marvelled at such a continuous flow of spirits, and at a benevolence so universal: "I cannot help it. I was born happy. My past contains nothing disagreeable, excepting a few hours long since forgotten; the present is like a cloudless sky; as to the future, I am certain of it, I hold it in my hands. You see that I should be mad to complain of fate or to take a dislike to my fellow-creatures!"

As there is nothing perfect in this world, Madame Benoît had a fault, but a very innocent fault, which had never harmed any one but herself. She was, although ambition seems to be a privilege of the sterner sex, passionately ambitious. I regret that I have not found another word wherewith to express her only failing, for, to be candid, Madame Benoît's ambition had nought in common with that of the rest of mankind. She aimed neither at wealth nor honours, the forges of Arlange returned pretty regularly a hundred and fifty thousand francs a year; and as to honours, Madame Benoît was a woman who would accept nothing from the government of 1846. What was she pursuing then? A very slight thing. So slight a thing that you would not understand me unless I gave you an outline of the early life of Madame Benoît, whose maiden name was Lopinot.

Gabrielle-Auguste-Eliane Lopinot was born in the centre of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, on the borders of that happy rivulet of the Rue du Bac, which Madame de Staël preferred to all the great rivers of Europe. Her parents, shopkeepers up to their chins, sold articles of millinery at the sign of the "Bon Saint-Louis" and were quietly amassing a colossal fortune. Their well-known principles, their enthusiasm for the monarchy, and the respect they displayed for the nobility secured them the patronage of the whole Faubourg. Lopinot, like a well-bred purveyor, never sent in an account before being asked to do so. He was never known to sue a refractory debtor. And so the crusaders' descendants often figured as insolvents at the "Bon Saint-Louis;" but those who paid paid for the others. This estimable shopkeeper, surrounded by illustrious people, some of whom duped him, whilst others allowed themselves to be swindled, came by degrees to despise equally his noble patrons. He appeared very humble and respectful in his shop; but he would regain his real bearing like a spring, when he reached his home. He would astonish his wife and daughter by the liberty of his judgments, and the audacity of his maxims. It would have needed but little more to cause Madame Lopinot to cross herself religiously when she heard him say after dinner: "I like marquises very well, and they appear to be decent sort of men; but at no price would I have a marquis for a son-in-law."

This was not Gabrielle-Auguste-Eliane's opinion. She would have been very well satisfied with a marquis, and, as we must all of us play a part in this world, she would willingly have given the preference to that of a marchioness. This child, as much accustomed to see carriages pass by as little peasants are to seeing swallows fly about, had lived in a constant succession of splendour. Disposed to admiration, like most young girls, she had admired the objects that sur-



rounded her, mansions, horses, dresses, and liveries. When she was twelve years old, a great name exercised a sort of fascination on her ear; when fifteen, she felt profound respect for what is called the Faubourg Saint-Germain, that is to say, for that incomparable aristocracy which knows itself to be superior by right of birth to all the human race. When she reached a marriageable age, the first idea that crossed her mind was that a lucky chance might enable her to enter into those mansions, the outer doors of which alone she had until then beheld, might place her by the side of those radiant, noble ladies whom she dared not look in the face, and help her to join in those conversations which she believed to be more witty than the most beautiful books, and more interesting than the best novels. "After all," thought she, "it will not need a great miracle to lower the impassable barrier before me. It will suffice if my face or my dowry attract a count, a duke, or a marquis." Her ambition aimed above all at a marquisate, and for this very good reason. There are dukes and counts who have been but recently created, and whom the Faubourg do not recognise; whilst all the marquises without an exception come from the old stock, for none have been created since Molière's time.

Had she been left to her own devices I suppose that she would easily have found the man she desired for husband. But she lived under her mother's wing, in perfect solitude, where M. Lopinot came from time to time to offer her the hand of an attorney, a notary, or of a stock-broker. She disdainfully refused all offers until 1829; but one fine morning she noticed that she was over twenty-five, and she suddenly espoused M. Morel, owner of some forges at Arlange. He was a worthy commoner whom she would have loved quite as well as a marquis had she had time to do so. But he died on the 31st of July 1830, six months after the birth of his daughter. The lovely widow was so incensed with the

Revolution of July that she almost forgot to weep for her husband. The troubles of inheritance and the management of the forges kept her at Arlange, until the cholera of 1832, which carried off her father and mother in a few days. She then returned to Paris, sold the "Bon Saint-Louis," and bought her mansion in the Rue Saint-Dominique, next door to the Count de Preux, and the Maréchale de Lons. She settled herself with her daughter in her new residence ; and it was not without secret delight that she found herself dwelling in a mansion of noble appearance, between a count and a maréchale. Her furniture was more costly than theirs, her conservatory larger, her horses more thorough-bred, and her carriages more elegant. Yet she would willingly have given conservatory, furniture, horses and carriages, if in return she could have been on visiting terms with her neighbours. Her garden walls were not more than twelve feet high, and, on quiet summer evenings she heard people talking sometimes at the count's, sometimes at the maréchale's. Unhappily she was not allowed to take part in the conversation. One morning her gardener brought her an old cockatoo which he had caught on a tree. She blushed with pleasure on recognising the maréchale's parrot. She would not give any one the satisfaction of taking this beautiful bird back to its mistress, and at the risk of having her hands pecked to bits, she took it back herself. But she was received by a portly butler, who thanked her warmly on the door-step. A few days later the Count de Preux's children sent a beautiful new ball into her garden. The fear of being again-thanked by a butler caused her to send the ball back to the countess by one of her servants, with a witty and most aristocratically worded note. The children's tutor, a real pedant, answered, and that was all the beautiful widow (she was then in the full bloom of her beauty) got for her advances. She would sometimes say to herself when she returned home at night, "Fate

is very absurd ! I have the right to enter No. 57 as often as I like, and yet I am unable to creep into either 59 or 55 for even a quarter of an hour." Her only acquaintances in the Faubourg were a few of her father's debtors, whom she was careful not to ask for money. As a reward for her circumspection, these honourable people received her sometimes in the morning. At noon, she could throw off her robe ; all her calls were over.

The manager of the forge put an end to this monotonous existence by calling her back to business. On arriving at Arlange, she found what she had looked for in vain all over Paris—the key to the Faubourg Saint-Germain. For over three months, one of her country neighbours had been lodging the Marquis de Kerpry, captain in the 2nd regiment of dragoons. The marquis was a man of forty, a bad officer, a jolly fellow, always well, insured against old age, and celebrated for his debts, duels, and follies. Besides all that, he was rich in his pay, that is to say, exceedingly poor. "I possess my marquisate !" thought the beautiful Eliane. She paid her addresses to the marquis, and he was not obdurate. Two months later he sent in his resignation to the minister of war, and led Morel's widow to the altar. Conformably to the law, a notice of the marriage was posted up in the Commune of Arlange, in the 10th arrondissement of Paris, and in the last garrison town where the captain had been on duty. The bridegroom's certificate of birth, drawn up during the Reign of Terror, only bore the vulgar name of Benoît, but there was subjoined a record of public notoriety attesting that from the memory of man, Benoît had been known as Marquis de Kerpry.

The new marchioness began by opening her drawing-room to the Faubourg Saint-Germain of the neighbourhood : for the Faubourg extends to the frontiers of France. After having dazzled the neighbouring squires with her luxury,

she wished to go to Paris and have her revenge on the past ; and she told her plans to her husband. The captain frowned and declared that he found himself very comfortable at Arlange. The cellar was good, the cooking to his taste, the shooting splendid ; he did not wish for anything else. The Faubourg Saint-Germain was for him a country as new as America : he had no relations there, no friends, no acquaintances. "Good heavens !" exclaimed poor Eliane, "have I then fixed on the only marquis on earth who does not know the Faubourg Saint-Germain !" That was not her only disappointment. She soon perceived that her husband took absinthe four times a day, without mentioning some vermouth which he had had sent from Paris for his private use. The captain's reason did not always resist these repeated libations, and when he lost his common sense, it was, usually, to get into a rage. His sudden fits of passion spared no one, not even Eliane, who came to wishing in good earnest that she were no longer a marchioness. This event happened sooner than she had hoped for.

One day the captain was suffering for having been too well on the previous day. His head was heavy and his eyes dull. Sitting in the largest armchair in the drawing-room, he was giving a gloss to his long auburn moustaches. His wife, standing near, was constantly pouring out enormous cups of tea for him. A servant announced the Count de Kerptry. The captain, ill as he was, rose hastily to his feet.

"Did you not tell me that you had no relations ?" asked Eliane, tolerably astonished.

"I was not aware that I had any," answered the captain, "and may the deuce take me—But we will see. Ask him in !"

The captain smiled scornfully when there appeared a young man of twenty, of an almost childlike beauty. He was of reasonable height, but so frail and delicate, that one

was tempted to think that he had not finished growing. His large blue eyes looked around him with a kind of savage shyness. When he beheld the beautiful Eliane, he blushed as rosy as a peach. The sound of his voice was soft, fresh, and clear ; I was about to say womanish. Had it not been for the brown moustache which was just perceptible above his upper lip, one might have taken him for a young girl disguised as a man.

"Sir," said he to the captain, turning himself partly towards Eliane, although I have not the honour of being known to you, I come to talk over some family matters. Our conversation, which will be long, will doubtless contain some tiresome chapters, and I fear that madame will be horribly wearied by them."

"You need be under no apprehensions, sir," answered Eliane, drawing herself up ; "the Marchioness de Kerpry desires to know, and should know all family matters, and as you are a relative of my husband's—"

"I am at present in doubt on that point, madame, but we shall soon settle it, and before you, as you wish it and your husband appears to consent."

The captain was listening in a stupid way, understanding very little. The young count turned towards him as though attacking him directly : "Sir," said he to him, "I am the eldest son of the Marquis de Kerpry, who is known to the whole of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and who lives in the Rue Saint Dominique, No. 40."

"What happiness !" thoughtlessly exclaimed Eliane.

The count answered this exclamation with a cold and ceremonious bow. He continued : "Sir, as my father, grandfather, and great grandfather were only sons, and as there have never been two branches in the family, you will excuse the surprise we felt on the day when we saw the marriage of a Marquis de Kerpry announced in the papers."

"Had I then not the right to marry?" inquired the captain, rubbing his eyes.

"I do not say that. Sir, we have at home, besides the family genealogical tree, all the documents which establish our right to bear the name of Kerpry. If you are a relative, as I hope you are, I do not doubt that you also are in possession of some family papers."

"What is their use? scraps of paper prove nothing, and every one knows that I am the Marquis de Kerpry."

"You are right, sir, it does not require many documents to establish a right; a certificate of birth—"

"Sir, my certificate of birth bears the name of Benoît. It is dated 1794. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir, and, in spite of this unlucky certificate of birth, I still hope to find I am your relative. Were you born at Kerpry, or in the neighbourhood?"

"Kerpry? Kerpry? Where is Kerpry?"

"Why, where it has always been; three leagues from Dijon, on the road to Paris."

"Well, sir, and what is that to me? Robespierre sold the family estates."

"You have been misinformed, sir. It is true that the land and the château were put up for sale as belonging to emigrants, but no one would buy them, and King Louis XVIII. deigned to restore them to my father."

The captain had got rid of his torpor by degrees; this last shaft effectually roused him. He advanced with clinched fists towards his frail adversary, and shouted in his face: "My little sir, for forty years I have been Marquis de Kerpry, and he who deprives me of my name will have a strong arm."

The count turned pale with passion, but he remembered the presence of Eliane, who reclined perfectly dumbfounded, in an easy chair. He replied in a flippant manner: "My big sir, though trials by combat are no longer in fashion I

would willingly accept the means of conciliation you offer me, if I were alone concerned in this matter. But I represent here my father, my brothers and a whole family, who would have a right to complain were I to stake its interests in such a way. Allow me, therefore, to return to Paris. The law courts will decide which of us usurps the other's name."

Thereupon the count turned on his heel, bowed profoundly to the supposed marchioness, and regained his post-chaise before the captain had thought of detaining him. The tea was cold, but it was no longer a question of tea between the captain and his wife. Eliane wished to know whether she was Marchioness de Kerpry or not. The impetuous Benoît, whose stock of patience was exhausted, forgot himself so far as to strike the prettiest woman in the province. It was to these matters that Madame Benoît alluded when she spoke of a few disagreeable hours long since forgotten. It was not long before the case of Kerpry *versus* Kerpry came on for hearing. M. Benoît's repeated assurances that he had always been called Marquis de Kerpry were of no avail, he was condemned for the future to sign his name "Benoît" and to pay the costs. The day on which he received this news, he wrote the young count an insulting letter, signed "Benoît." The following Sunday, towards eight in the morning, he was brought home on a litter with four inches of steel in his body. He had fought, and the count's sword had broken in the wound. Eliane, who was still sleeping, was with him in time to receive his excuses and his farewell.

If this adventure had not given rise to a fearful scandal, the country would not be the country. The neighbouring squires gave vent to a comical exasperation: they would have liked to have taken back from the false marchioness the calls they had paid her. The widow did not hear the clamour

raised around her : she was weeping, not that she regretted Benoit in any way ; his faults, great and small, had for ever cured her of matrimony ; but she lamented her misplaced confidence, her crushed hopes, her limited horizon, her impotent ambition. If you wish to picture the state of her mind imagine a fakir who is told that he will never see Wichnou. From the depths of her seclusion she cast on the Faubourg Saint-Germain looks like those of Eve driven from Paradise. One morning, as she was weeping under an arbour of clematis in full bloom—it was in the summer of 1834—her daughter ran past her. She detained the child by her dress and kissed her five or six times, reproaching herself for thinking more of her sorrows than of her daughter. When she had thoroughly embraced her, she looked at her very closely, and was satisfied with the examination. At four and a-half years old, little Lucile already showed signs of a fine aristocratic beauty ; Eliane could not recollect having seen playing in the Tuileries gardens a single child of so distinguished a type. She gave the little girl another kiss and let her escape. She then wiped her eyes and wept no more.

“ What could I have been thinking of ? ” murmured she, recovering her happiest smile. “ All is not lost ; all can be settled ; everything is arranged ; it is well ; it is all for the best ! I shall enter ; it is merely a case of patience ; it will take some time, but those proud gates will open before me. I shall not be a marchioness, no ; I have had enough of marriage, and I will not be caught at it again. The marchioness, she is there, walking over the strawberry beds. I will choose a marquis for her, a genuine one ; my experience must be of some use. I shall be the real mother of a real marchioness ! She will be received everywhere, and I also ; welcomed everywhere ; so shall I ; she will dance with dukes, and I—I will watch her dance, unless the gentlemen of 1830 make a law that the mothers shall be left in the cloak-room ! ”



From that moment, her only thought was to school her daughter to the life of a marchioness. She dressed her up like a doll, taught her the several dissimulations of which high life consists, and showed her how to curtsy, while her governess was teaching her her letters. Unhappily, little Lucile was not born in the Rue du Bac. She awoke to the singing of birds and not to the rolling of carriages, and she saw more peasants in smock frocks than footmen in liveries. She no more listened to her mother's lessons on aristocracy, than her mother had listened to M. Lopinot's satirical remarks on marquises. Children's minds are formed by their surroundings; they listen to a hundred teachers at once; the noises of the country and the clamours of the street speak to them far more effectually than the harshest pedant or the most rigorous father. Madame Benoit preached in vain: the early amusements of the youthful marchioness were fighting with the little peasant girls, rolling on the gravel in a new dress, stealing new-laid eggs from the fowl-house, and being dragged about by a big Scotch dog whilst she held on to his tail. Seeing her playing in the garden, an attentive observer would have divined the descendant of Morel and old Lopinot. Her mother grieved at finding in her no pride, no vanity, nor the slightest coquettish movement. She watched impatiently for the day when Lucile would despise some one; but Lucile opened her heart and her little arms to all the good people who surrounded her; from Margot the milkmaid to the blackest workman in the forge.

As she grew older, her tastes changed a little, though not in the direction that her mother wished. She became interested in the garden, the orchard, the cows, the poultry, the factory, the house, and even (why should I not say so?) in the kitchen. She looked after the fruit in the store-room, studied the art of making preserves, and acquired a taste for good pastry. Strange to say, the servants instead of resent-

ing her interference, were thankful to her for it. They understood, better than Madame Benoît, how advisable it is that a woman should acquire early habits of order and prudence, a wise and liberal economy, and those obscure talents which constitute the charms of a household and the comfort of the guests to whom it opens its doors. Madame Benoît's lessons had borne strange fruit. However, they were not entirely thrown away. The teacher was severe out of love for her daughter, impatient through love for the marquisate, and passionate by nature. She lost patience so often that Lucile became frightened of her mother. The poor child was told every day, "You know nothing, you understand nothing, you are lucky to possess me!" She frankly persuaded herself that she was lucky to have Madame Benoît. She really thought herself stupid and incapable; and instead of regretting it, she satisfied all her tastes, gave herself up to all her inclinations, was happy, beloved and charming.

Madame Benoît was so anxious to enjoy life and the Faubourg that she would have married off her daughter at fifteen had she been able to. But at fifteen Lucile was still but a child. The awkward age extended, in her case, beyond the usual limits. It has been observed that country children are less precocious than town ones; it is doubtless for the same reason as that which causes wild flowers to be later than garden ones. At sixteen Lucile began to develop. She was still slightly thin, a little red, and somewhat awkward; but her awkwardness, her thinness, and her red arms, were not scare-crows to startle love. She resembled those pure statues that German sculptors of the middle ages carved in the stone of the cathedrals; but no fanatic of Grecian art would have disdained being her Pygmalion. Her mother told her one fine morning whilst closing five or six trunks: "I am going to Paris to find a marquis whom you will

marry." "Yes, mamma," she replied without making any objection. She had known for years that she was to marry a marquis. Only one care pre-occupied her, and this she had not dared to confide to any one. In the drawing-room of one of her mother's friends, Madame Mélier, whilst looking over an album of costumes, she had come across a coloured engraving representing a marquis. He was a little old man, dressed as in the time of Louis XV., knee-breeches, shoes with gold buckles, a sword with a steel hilt, a hat with feathers, and a spangled coat. This picture was so well engraved in her memory, that it always appeared at the bare mention of the name of marquis; besides, the poor child could not persuade herself that there were other marquises in the world. She thought that they were all modelled after the same pattern, and she asked herself with dread how she should manage to keep from laughing when giving her hand to her husband.

Whilst she was giving way to these innocent fears, Madame Benoît was in quest of a marquis. She soon found one. Amongst her father's debtors with whom she had kept up acquaintance, the most amiable was the old Baron de Lubressac. Not only was he always at home to her, but he would also occasionally do her the pleasure of lunching with her. These familiarities were not compromising with a man of seventy-five. She asked him once, between the last two glasses of a bottle of Tokay, if he ever occupied himself with marriages.

"Never, my charmer, since there have been offices for that sort of thing."

The baron called her "my charmer" paternally.

"But," continued she without being disheartened, "if it was a question of doing a kindness to two of your friends?"

"If you were one of them, madame, I would obey all your commands."

"You are at the heart of the question. I know a young girl of sixteen, pretty, well brought up, who has never been to school, an angel! But, to be frank, I do not see why I should have secrets from you; she is my daughter. She has as dowry, first of all the house we are now in, I only mention it as a reminder; then a forest of a thousand acres; then a forge that is no trouble, and which in the very worst times brings in one hundred and fifty thousand francs a year. Out of that she will have to allow me an annuity of fifty thousand francs, which, added to a little property I possess, will enable me to live comfortably. We say therefore, a house, a forest, and at least a hundred thousand francs a year."

"It is very handsome."

"Wait! For very delicate reasons which I cannot divulge, my daughter must marry a marquis; we do not require money; nor will we be particular as regards age, mind, good looks and all external advantages; what we require is a genuine marquis of a good old stock, well connected, known to all the Faubourg, and who can proudly present himself with his wife and family everywhere. Now, baron, are you acquainted with a marquis whom you love sufficiently to wish him to possess a pretty wife and a handsome income."

"To tell you the truth, my charmer, I should not find two, but I know one. If your daughter marries him, she will marry a man whom I love as a son. But I give you far better than what you ask for."

"Really?"

"First of all he is young: twenty-eight."

"A mere detail, continue."

"He is very handsome."

"Vanity of vanities!"

"Your daughter will not be of the same opinion. He is full of wit."

"Useless wares in a household."

"A solid education: late pupil of the Ecole Polytechnique!"

"What next?"

"He has besides made special studies which will not be—"

"That is all very well, baron; but has he anything substantial?"

"Ah! as regards money he answers too exactly to your programme. He is completely ruined. He sent in his resignation on leaving the school, because—"

"I forgive him, baron."

"The last time that he came to see me the poor fellow was thinking of looking out for a situation."

"His situation is all ready for him; but tell me, dear baron, is he very noble?"

"As noble as Charlemagne. That is, I suppose, what you call substantial?"

"Of course."

"One of his ancestors well-nigh became king of Antioch in 1098."

"And his relations?"

"The whole Faubourg."

"Is his name well known?"

"As celebrated as Henry IV. He is the Marquis d'Outreville. You must have heard—"

"I believe so. Outreville!—it is a pretty name. We will put a marble slab over the entrance: HÔTEL D'OUTREVILLE. But will he accept my daughter? For him it will be a misalliance!"

"Oh! my charmer, a man can form no misalliance. I can understand that a girl, whose name is either Mademoiselle de Montmorency or Mademoiselle de la Rochefoucauld should have an aversion to change it for that of Madame Mignolet. But a man keeps his name, therefore he loses nothing. Besides Gaston has none of the prejudices of his class. I will

see him on leaving here ; and to-morrow at the latest you shall hear more of him."

"Do better, my dear baron : if he is favourably disposed, bring him to dine here, to-morrow, without ceremony. Has he any family papers ? a genealogical tree ?"

"No doubt."

"Endeavour then to make him bring them !"

"Can you think of such a thing, my charmer ? I will come one day and explain them all to you. Good-bye for the present."

The baron walked slowly towards No. 34 Rue Saint-Benoît. It was a large house and the principal tenant had furnished a few rooms for students. He went up to the second floor and knocked at a small door which was numbered. The marquis in working attire admitted him. He was decidedly a handsome young man and a very desirable husband. He was rather tall, but so well made that no one thought of grudging him a few inches. His feet and hands testified that his ancestors had done nothing for several centuries. His head was well-shaped and handsome : a lofty forehead, broad and crowned with black hair that fell back naturally ; blue eyes of infinite softness, but set far back under his large eyebrows ; a proudly arched nose whose fine nostrils trembled at the least emotion ; a rather large mouth and charming teeth ; a thick black and glossy moustache that surmounted his beautiful red lips without hiding them ; a complexion at once brown and pink, the tint of work and health. The baron took in all this at a glance, whilst shaking Gaston's hand, and he murmured to himself : "If the little one is not pleased with the present I am making her !" The young marquis's face was unclouded but not cheerful. On examining it carefully, one would have noticed a continual movement of anxiety, the perpetual agitation of an unsatisfied wish, the tyranny of a predominant idea. Perhaps even on examining

further, one might have recognised the seal of predestination that is set on the countenances of all inventors.

Gaston had left his work to open the door to his old friend. He was busy laying Indian ink on to a large drawing, beneath which was written : "Plan, elevation and vertical view of an economical blast furnace." His table was covered with drawings and memoranda, the titles of which, half hidden by each other, were of a nature to excite the curiosity of the most indifferent. One read or rather guessed the following : "Notes on a more fusible new steel."—"A new system of blast furnaces."—"Most frequent accidents in mines and the way to prevent them."—"How to cast in one piece the wheels of——."—"New steam bellows for forges." Once one had glanced at that table, one noticed nothing else in the room. The small student's bed, the six chairs, the arm-chair covered with Utrecht velvet, the small bookcase overcrowded with books, the clock which had stopped, the two vases of artificial flowers, under their glass shades, the framed portraits of La Fayette and of General Foy, the red curtains with yellow stripes all disappeared before that pile of labour and hopes.

"My child," said the baron to the marquis, "it is fully a week since I last saw you : how have you been getting on?"

"Good news, baron ; I have a situation. A few days ago I inserted an advertisement in the papers. One of my old school friends who manages the mines of Poullaouen, in Finistere, guessed my name through the initials ; he mentioned me to the directors, and they offer me a situation worth 8000 francs a year, to commence on the 1st of May. It was time ! I have already changed my last hundred franc note. In five days I shall leave for Brittany. Poullaouen is a doleful place, where it rains during ten months of the year, and you know how much I love sunshine. But I shall be able to continue my studies, put a few of my

theories into practice, and make my experiments on a large scale; it is a fine future!"

"See how unlucky I am! I came to suggest something else."

"Speak out: I have not yet answered."

"Do you wish to marry?"

The marquis made a wry face. "It is very good of you to occupy yourself about me," said he to the old gentleman shaking both his hands, "but I have never given a thought to such matters. I have not the time; you are acquainted with my work; I have a thousand things to find; science is jealous."

"Tut, tut, tut!" resumed the baron laughing. "What! you are eight-and-twenty and you live like a friar; I came to offer you a virtuous girl, pretty, well brought up, an angel of sixteen summers: and this is how you receive me!"

A flash of youth lit up Gaston's beautiful eyes, but it was merely a fleeting one. "Thanks a thousand times," replied he, "but I have not the time. Marriage would impose upon me duties contrary to my tastes, unbearable occupations—"

"It will impose nothing. Your future father-in-law died more than fifteen years ago; the family consists of a mother-in-law, an excellent woman, in spite of her pretensions. To give you an idea of her ways, I will mention, that she has asked me to bring you to dine with her to-morrow, if this marriage is not distasteful to you. You see that she does not stand on ceremony!"

"Thanks, baron, but I have Poullaouen on the brain."

"What a man! by the marriage settlements you will be assured the ownership of a mansion in the Rue Saint-Dominique, a forest of a thousand acres in Lorraine, and an income of at least a hundred thousand francs. Will they give you as much at Poullaouen?"

"No, but I shall be in my element. Would you offer a



fish an income of a hundred thousand francs to live out of water?"

"Very well! we will dismiss the subject. I merely wished to mention it to you as I came by. Now I have some calls to make; good-bye. You will not leave without seeing me again?"

The baron moved towards the door smiling maliciously. Just as he was going out he turned round and observed to Gaston: "By the way the hundred thousand francs of income are the revenue of some splendid forges."

Gaston stopped him on the threshold. "Forges! Then I will marry! Will you allow me to call for you to-morrow to go and dine at my mother-in-law's?"

"No, no. Marry Poullaouen!"

"My dear baron!"

"Well, well, so be it. Till to-morrow then."

## CHAPTER II.

AFTER the baron's departure, Gaston d'Outreville threw himself into the arm-chair, rested his head in his hands, and lay buried in thought so long, that his Indian ink had time to dry. "Why in the world," he asked himself, "does a woman offer me her daughter and a hundred thousand francs a year?" I know a number of young men who, in his position, would have been less distressed. They would soon have imagined some romance to explain the whole business. But Gaston was no more a fop, than Lucile a coquette. The only idea that occurred to him was that Madame Benoît wanted for son-in-law a man who could superintend her forges. "She has heard me spoken of," thought he; "some one has told her of my researches and discoveries; I was well known in the

Faubourg at the time I was ignorant of the folly and vanity of worldly intercourse. It is evident that this factory is in need of a master : a mother and her daughter added together do not constitute a manager of forges. Who knows but that the works are failing, the undertaking in danger ? Well, hang it all, we will save it. Outreville to the rescue ! as our ancestors, those heroic mechanics who forged their own swords, used to cry." Thereupon he prepared some fresh Indian ink and conscientiously finished his work.

The following morning he walked about briskly in the Luxembourg garden till lunch-time. In the afternoon, he shut himself up in a reading-room, where he mechanically looked over all the daily papers and the month's magazines : it was long since he had had such a holiday. "It is lucky," thought he, "that one does not often get married : one would do but little work if one did." At five he began to dress, this was a long process : he expected to dine with his future wife. Half-past six was striking as he reached the baron's. He hoped to hear from his old friend why Madame Benoit had taken the fancy to choose him for son-in-law ; but the baron was as mysterious as an oracle. He had too much respect for his pride to tell him the truth of the case. On arriving at the mansion in the Rue Saint-Dominique, they noticed two workmen perched on a double ladder occupied in measuring something above the entrance.

"Guess," said the baron, "what those good people are doing up there ! they are measuring the size for a marble slab on which will be engraved : Hôtel d'Outreville."

"A good joke," retorted Gaston, crossing the threshold.

"You do not believe me ? Come back a minute. Ho, there ! M. Renaudot ; is it not you that I see ?"

"Yes, sir," replied the marble cutter, who came down instantly.

"How soon do you expect to be able to put up the slab ?"

"Oh ! not before a month, sir, because of the coat of arms to be carved above it."

"How so ! you only took a fortnight to do those of the Marquis de Croix-Maugars."

"Ah, sir, but the Outreville coat of arms is far more complicated ?"

"That is true. Good evening, M. Renaudot. Well, sceptic ?"

"I say, through what fairy-tale are you leading me, my old friend ?"

"It is something like 'Puss-in-boots,' as there is a marquis in it."

"I am much obliged to you."

"And the 'Sleeping Beauty,' as the future marchioness, who has never seen you, is innocently sleeping in the depths of your forest of Arlange waiting till the king's son comes and awakens her."

"What ! is she not here ?"

"We will let her know that you regretted her absence."

Madame Benoît welcomed her guests with open arms. Warned in time, of the success of the scheme, she ordered from Carême's a dinner fit for an archbishop. But little time was spent over introductions, acquaintances are more easily made at table. The conversation between mother and son-in-law began very amusingly. Gaston spoke of Arlange, Madame Benoît answered respecting the Faubourg, she asked questions concerning the nobility ; he would evade her questions and return to the forges, each obstinately followed the favourite idea. This stubborn struggle enlightened no one, not even the excellent baron, who gave himself up to the only delight of his age, and did more honour to the dinner than to the conversation. Thus Madame Benoît did not discover her son-in-law's passion, and Gaston did not even suspect his mother-in-law's mania. He thought, "It is one of two things: either Madame Benoît abstains out of vanity from talking

of that which interests her most, or she is afraid of wearying the baron, who is not listening to us." At the same time Madame Benoît was thinking, "The poor fellow believes he is doing an act of politeness in talking to me about things that I know, he is not aware that I am as well acquainted with the Faubourg as he is himself." Tired of the struggle, Gaston forsook the topic of iron and metallurgy, and Madame Benoît was able to question him as much as she wished. She knew by heart her father's ledger, that prosaic golden book of Parisian nobility, and she was acquainted with all the names that D'Hozier would have acknowledged. To ascertain if Gaston was in a position to escort her everywhere, she made him undergo, without his suspecting it, a curious examination, which he passed with honour. Her ambition rejoiced at learning that Gaston had dined here, that he had danced there, that he was very intimate in this house, that they scolded him in that one, that when ten years old he had played with a duke, and galloped with a prince when twenty. She wrote down in her mind, on tablets of stone and brass, all her son-in-law's near and distant relations. If she had forgotten a single one, she would have thought she was showing a want of respect to his family.

After the coffee, they went into the garden ; the night was splendid and the sky was illuminated as for an entertainment. Madame Benoît pointed out the neighbouring houses to the marquis. "Here we have the Count de Preux, do you know him ?"

"He is my uncle after the fashion of Brittany."

The vain woman triumphantly inscribed this unexpected relative. "There," continued she, "lives the Maréchale de Lens. It would be a strange circumstance if she were also of the family."

"She is no relative, madame, but she was godmother to a brother whom I have lost."

"Good," thought Madame Benoît. "If the stout butler is still of this world, we will see that he is dismissed. Such a son-in-law is a treasure!"

If Gaston had chosen to say: "Let us jump over the wall and go and surprise the maréchal;" it is probable Madame Benoît would have jumped. But the baron, who willingly retired to bed on rising from table, made haste to leave, and Gaston followed him. A good brougham, bearing Madame Benoît's monogram, was in waiting for them.

"My dear fellow," said the baron, "as soon as the door was shut, I have dined tremendously; and you?—But one does not dine at your age. How do you like your mother-in-law?"

"I find her all I could wish; she is a vain and empty-headed woman, who will not interfere with the forge, and who will not oppose my experiments."

"So much the better if she has pleased you. As to you, you have made quite a conquest; she told me so by a sign when I kissed her hand. I think that we can ask for the daughter's hand."

"So soon?"

"But it is thus that business is transacted in all fairy tales. When the king's son had awakened the Sleeping Beauty, he wedded her then and there, without even going to obtain his parents' consent."

"As for me, I have unhappily no need of any one's consent."

"If you think that to-morrow is a little too soon, we will wait a few days. I shall hold myself at your disposal, and you will tell me when I am to don my white kid gloves. By the way, you will have to lend me your certificate of birth and a few other indispensable documents."

"Whenever you like. I have all my papers together; you can take what will be necessary."

The carriage stopped in front of the baron's home. Gaston got out with his friend and walked the rest of the way to make sure that he was not dreaming. On the morrow, M. de Subresac called for his certificate of birth, and took away, as though inadvertently, all the other documents. He intrusted the whole to Madame Benoît, who, by an excess of prudence, submitted them to a palæographical archivist, late a pupil at the College of Charters and assistant librarian at the Royal Library. The authenticity of the smallest document was acknowledged and certified. The baron then proposed on his friend's behalf, and was accepted, as you can well imagine. The happy wife remained a short time undecided whether to marry her daughter at Paris, or transplant that grand ceremony to the little church of Arlange. On the one hand, it was very flattering to monopolise the high-altar of the fashionable church of St. Thomas d'Aquin and to disturb half the Faubourg for the marriage ceremony; but there was a little revenge to be taken, and it was necessary to erase the last traces of the marquisate of Kerpry from the memory of her acquaintances in the country. Madame Benoît decided in favour of Arlange, but with the firm intention of shortly returning to Paris.

She wrote to her coach-builder: "M. Barnes, I shall leave on the 5th of May to marry my daughter, who weds, as you know, the Marquis d'Outreville. Immediately after my departure, you will send for all my carriages to repair them, and to paint on the doors the enclosed coat of arms. Besides this, I wish you to build for me as quickly as possible a family coach in the old style, broad, high, and of the noblest shape that you can. The coachman and footmen will wear their hair powdered; let that guide you for the harmony of the colours."

She then remembered that it would be her daughter who would introduce her into the aristocratic world, and this

thought inspired her with a vast increase of maternal love. She wrote to Lucile, whom she had not accustomed to much tenderness : " My dear child, my pretty pet, my beloved Lucile, I have found the husband that I was seeking for you, you will be Marchioness d'Outreville ! I have chosen him out of a thousand, so that he should be worthy of you : he is young, handsome, full of sense, of an old and glorious nobility, and allied to the most illustrious families of France. Dear child, your happiness is insured, and so is mine, as I live but for you. You will soon come to Paris, you shall soon leave that dull Arlauge where you have lived like a beautiful butterfly in a black chrysalis ; you will be welcomed and made much of by the greatest families ; I shall lead you from pleasure to pleasure, from triumph to triumph, what a sight for a mother's eyes ! "

Madame Benoît felt as light as a tom-tit ; her feet no longer touched the earth ; her face looked ten years younger ; one could almost see a halo round her head. She sang, danced, laughed and cried, she had a great desire to stop the passers-by, to tell them her joy ; she caught herself bowing to the ladies she met in emblazoned carriages. She was so tender towards the marquis, she surrounded him with such a network of small attentions and cares, that Gaston, who had not been any one's spoilt child for a long while, felt a sincere friendship for his future mother-in-law. He seldom left her, escorted her everywhere, and was never weary of being with her, although she avoided all conversation about the forges. The eve of her departure, Madame Benoît retained him for the whole day. She took him first of all to Tahan's, where she chose in his presence a large rose-wood box, long, broad and flat ; the inside of which was divided into unequal compartments.

" What is the use of that strange box ? " Gaston asked as they were leaving.

"That? that is for my daughter's marriage outfit."

"But, madame," replied Gaston with the pride of the poor, "I think it is I who should—"

"You think wrongly. My dear marquis, once you are Lucile's husband you can make her as many presents as you like; from the morrow of the ceremony, you have carte blanche; but, till then, I only have the right to give her anything. I look upon the custom that allows a girl's betrothed to give her fifty thousand francs worth of clothes and jewellery, before the marriage, and when as yet he is nothing to her, as absurd. Say, if you will, that I have ridiculous prejudices, but I am too old to give them up. To-day we are going to choose my wedding presents: in a month I will, if you like, help you to choose yours."

The argument was easy to refute, but it was expressed in such a caressing tone, and in such a maternal voice, that Gaston found no answer to it. For three days he had been parleying with an usurer concerning this unlucky outfit. He allowed himself to be conducted to twenty different shops and selected silks, shawls, laces and jewellery. No diamonds; Madame Benoît shared her own with her daughter. She took leave of her future son-in-law on the 5th of May, requesting him to join her on the 12th. She undertook to have the first announcement made in the church and at the mairie, whilst Gaston hurried on his hosier and his tailor. In the confusion which always attaches to a departure, she packed up inadvertently all the documents concerning the Outreville family.

Lucile's first thought, on seeing Madame Benoît, was that her mother had been changed in Paris. Never had the pretty widow been so pleasant and indulgent. All that Lucile did was well done; she behaved like an angel, and her words were of gold. Never would the affectionate mother be separated from so accomplished a daughter; she would follow



her till death. She would say to her, as in the story of Ruth : "Thy country shall be my country." Lucile opened her heart to this new mother, and learnt with great satisfaction that there were many young marquises, well formed, and who did not wear spangled clothes. The day following Madame Benoît's return, her friend Madame Mélier came to announce the forthcoming marriage of her daughter Céline with M. Jordy, sugar refiner of Paris. M. Jordy was a very wealthy young man, and Madame Mélier did not conceal her joy at having so well settled her daughter. Madame Benoît quickly retaliated by proclaiming Lucile's approaching marriage with the Marquis d'Outrevillo. There were mutual congratulations, and they embraced repeatedly.

When Madame Mélier had left, Lucile, who had known the future Madame Jordy from childhood, exclaimed : "What happiness : if I go to Paris, I shall be quite near to Céline ; she will come and see me ; I shall go and see her ; we shall meet every day."

"Yes, my child," replied Madame Benoît, "you will go and see her in your coach with powdered footmen ; but as to receiving her at your house, it is very different. One owes one's-self to one's own set, and one is somewhat the slave of the society amongst which one lives. When a duchess honours your drawing-room with her presence, she must not come in contact with the wife of a sugar refiner, of a man who makes sugar loaves ! There is no need to pout. Let us see ! you can receive Céline in the morning, before twelve o'clock."

"Goodness ! what a stupid place Paris is ! I prefer stopping in my poor Arlange, where one can see one's friends at any time of the day."

Madame Benoît retorted sententiously, "A wife's duty is to follow her husband."

The news of the great event about to take place at Arlange,

soon spread all about the neighbourhood. Madame Mélier was making a round of calls, and, as she was announcing one marriage, it did not cost more to announce two. At each house where she stopped, she repeated a set sentence, which she had composed on leaving Madame Benoît: "Madame, I know too well the interest that you entertain towards all our family, not to announce personally dear Céline's marriage. She marries, not a marquis, like Mademoiselle Lucile Benoît, but a handsome and worthy manufacturer, M. Jordy, who, though only thirty-three years old, is one of the richest sugar refiners in Paris." Madame Mélier possessed good horses: her carriage; and the news that she was spreading went ten leagues before night. The Faubourg Saint-Germain of that part of the country began by pitying poor Lucile and ridiculing Madame Benoît, who had found a second Marquis de Kerpry for her daughter. Madame Benoît heard all that was said about her without changing countenance. Taking with her the d'Outreville family documents she drove to the residence of an old baroness, named Madame de Sommerfogel, who was a great gossip and very influential.

"Madame," she said in the most respectful tone, "although I have only had the honour of receiving you two or three times, I needed nothing more to appreciate the infallibility of your judgment, your great knowledge of the manners of the nobility, and all your qualities of observation and experience. You know how I was disgracefully deceived by a rogue, who had stolen, I know not how, an honourable name. To-day a match offers itself for my daughter, which is in appearance magnificent—I speak of the Marquis d'Outreville. I have in my possession his genealogical tree and all his family documents and parchments from the most remote times. But I belong to the middle class, and am without discernment in these matters, as it has been cruelly proved to me, and I dare not decide anything by myself. Will you allow me, madame, to

submit to you the documents with which I have been intrusted, so that you may decide upon them without appeal and as a last resort !”

This little speech was not unskilful ; it flattered the baroness's vanity, and excited her curiosity. Madame de Sommerfogel welcomed the pretty widow and accepted with visible satisfaction the important task intrusted to her. On the same day she assembled all the nobility of the surrounding districts, and Gaston's papers passed through the hands of twenty or thirty country noblemen : that was what Madame Benoît had hoped for. This venerable bundle of papers which exhaled an odour of true nobility, made a profound impression on all the squires who were able to smell them. The most hostile towards Madame Benoît were now in her favour. It was a chorus of praises, to which Madame de Sommerfogel filled the office of conductor.

“That poor Madame Benoît will have the wherewithal to console herself, and I am very glad of it ; she is a meritorious woman.”

“That Benoît who deceived her was a lazy beggar. If we had known her in those days we would have warned her.”

“After all, for what can one blame her ? For having wished to belong to the aristocracy ? This shows that in the eyes of enlightened citizens the aristocracy is still something.”

“Madame Benoît is no fool.”

“Nor ugly. I do not know what her secret is for looking so young.”

“As for her daughter, she is a little angel.”

“It is some time since I saw her, in 1836. She was looking very promising then.”

“For the future we shall see a good deal of her ; she is now one of us.”

“She was so already by her education. I have heard that her mother always desired to make a marchioness of her.”

"Her mother will also be one of us ; a daughter does not go about without her mother."

"The marquis is expected very shortly ; he will be a great acquisition for the aristocracy of the canton."

"He is said to be fabulously rich."

"They will keep up an extensive establishment."

"They will give parties."

"We shall be invited to the wedding."

The following day Madame Benoît's drawing-room was invaded by a horde of intimate friends whom she had not seen for twelve years.

The marquis arrived on the 12th of May in time for dinner. After having sought and found a thousand francs, which did not cost him more than twelve hundred, he had packed up his things, embraced the baron, and modestly taken the Nancy coach. At Nancy, he took the Dieuze diligence ; at Dieuze he hired a cabriolet and a post-horse and drove on to Arlange. It takes about an hour when the roads are in good condition. On nearing the village he felt something in his left side which greatly resembled a palpitation. I must say, to the shame of the student, and the praise of the man, that he thought of Lucile and not of the forge. An illustrious Englishwoman disregarding cant, Lady Montague, wondered that the Apollo of the Belvedere and I know not which ancient Venus could remain both in the same museum without falling into each other's arms. This is what almost happened at the meeting of Lucile and Gaston. These young people, who had never before seen each other, felt at the same time that they were born one for another. At first sight they were lovers ; at the first words they were friends : youth attracted youth, and beauty beauty. There was no uneasiness or shyness between them ; they looked each other in the face, and admired each other with the charming shamelessness of innocence ; Gaston's heart was

almost as pure as Lucile's. Their love was born without mystery, like those beautiful summer suns which rise without a cloud. I do not deny the intoxication of those guilty passions which remorse stimulates, and danger ennobles; but that which is the most beautiful in the world, is a legitimate love that advances peacefully along a flowery path, with honour on its right hand, and safety on its left.

Madame Benoit was too happy and too sensible to fetter the growth of a love which helped her so well. She allowed the two lovers to enjoy the liberty that the country authorises: their first days were but a long tête-à-tête. Lucile did the honours of the house, the garden, and the forest; they rode at twelve, after luncheon, and returned, like children who have played truant, long after the dinner bell had rung. After the forest, came the forge. Gaston had had the patience not to enter it without Lucile; but when he saw that she did not despise labour, that she knew the workmen by their names, and that she was not afraid of soiling her dresses, his joy was doubled. He gave himself up without constraint to the passion of his youth; he examined the works, questioned the foremen, advised the heads of the workshops, and delighted Lucile who wondered at his being so learned and so clever. Madame Benoit, when she saw them come in covered with dust or somewhat blackened by the smoke, would say, "How happy children are! to them everything is a toy!" To rest from their fatigues, they sat down at the end of the garden under an arbour covered by climbing roses; and they made plans—plans of happiness and work, of love and retirement. They anticipated hiding their joy in the depths of the woods of Arlange, like birds hide their nests in the densest thickets or on the most leafy trees. Not a word of Paris; no mention of the Faubourg or of the vanities of the world. Lucile ignored that there were other pleasures; Gaston had forgotten them.

One fine morning Madame Benoît announced a great event, the signing of the marriage contract in the evening. The wedding was fixed for the 1st of June, and the civil ceremony would take place the day before at the mairie. As there is no pleasure without pain, the signing of the marriage contract was preceded by an interminable dinner, to which all the principal personages of the neighbourhood had been invited. Whilst awaiting the arrival of the guests, Gaston and Lucile walked in the garden in straw hats, the former clad in a white linen suit, and the latter in a light pink dress. Passing by the factory, Gaston was accosted by the manager, who held him in high estimation and who willingly asked his advice. All three went into one of the workshops, and an interesting experiment was begun before them. When the factory clock struck four, Lucile ran off to dress, saying to Gaston: "You have time to see the end; remain, I wish it!" He remained, and became so interested in the spectacle that he lent a hand to the job, and soiled his clothes abominably. At five o'clock he went off, his sleeves turned up and his hands black, and ran into the midst of a group of guests who were promenading about in grand attire. Some one recognised him and called him by his name. It was the engineer directing the Dieuze salt-pits, one of his comrades. The Ecole Polytechnique is, like the aristocracy of the Faubourg, slightly masonic; it meets again everywhere. Gaston flung his arms round his friend's neck and kissed him on both cheeks, holding his hands up in the air for fear of soiling his friend's clothes. There were three or four noble ladies there who were rather surprised at seeing a marquis attired like a sweep, and kissing the director of a mine on both cheeks: but they became reconciled with him when he appeared in a new coat, cut evidently in the very latest fashion."

At dinner he was to sit between Madame Benoît and the Baroness de Sommerfogel; but the old lady was seized with

a sick headache, when on the point of starting from her home. Her apologies arrived during the soup. By these means Gaston found himself seated next to his friend the engineer. He was the centre of all looks ; each guest, and especially the delegates of the nobility, expected a smile and a pleasant word from him, as at court one hopes for a word from the king. But his two passions absorbed him too much, to allow him to pay much attention to the grotesque collection of provincials feeding around him. He had eyes only for Lucile and ears only for his neighbour. The country squires hoped to attract his attention by starting a semi-political conversation, in which the absurdity of the old prejudices was artlessly set forth ; a conversation full of railing against that which existed ; full of regret for that which had been. These speeches, the delicious absurdity of which would have resuscitated a marquis of the good old times from his grave, buzzed around Gaston's ears without attracting his attention.

During a lull in the conversation, he was heard to say to the engineer : " You have an underground railway in the salt pits : how much do you pay for rails ? "

" In France, 360 francs the 1000 kilos. The English ton which contains 15 kilos more, is worth, free on board, from £11 10s. to £12 5s."

" I think that by using certain economical furnaces, the plan of which I will show you, one would be enabled to produce an excellent article, costing much less than the English prices, at 200 francs a ton, or less perhaps."

" You are always the same then ? "

" No, worse. Do your cables ever break ? "

" Too often : we lost four men last month."

" I will tell you how to prevent such accidents."

" What ! you have discovered how to prevent cables from breaking ? "

" No, but to prevent their load from falling when they do

snap. I tried my system during three years in a coal-mine that I superintended at St. Etienne, and we did not have a single serious accident."

All the nobility of the canton pricked up their ears, and Madame Benoît longed to tread on her future son-in-law's toes. The Viscount de Bourgaltroff timidly joined in the conversation: "You possess then, marquis, some coal-mines in the Département of the Loire?"

"No, sir," answered Gaston. "The mine that I was working belongs to a retired ribbon merchant, named Claquepost; I was merely manager of the works."

On hearing this, Madame Benoît thought that every one had had sufficient dessert, and she left the table. Whilst passing to the drawing-room, the noblemen made whispered remarks to each other concerning the marquis: "A curious nobleman this who blackens his hands in a forge, who embraces workmen, who invents machines, who sells iron-rails at such a cheap rate, and who has worked like a common workman at a colliery at St. Etienne."

The more indulgent ones, who were in the minority, tried to vindicate him. "After all," said they, "Louis XVI. made locks."

"Louis XVIII. wrote Latin verses."

"Henri III. shaved his courtiers."

"But," argued a critic, "who ever amuses himself in breaking coals at the bottom of a pit at St. Etienne?"

"Well, sir," answered an indulgent person, "my father sulphured matches at Berlin at the time of the emigration."

Madame Benoît guessed that they were commenting upon Gaston, but it did not trouble her much: "Chatter away, my good friends," she muttered between her teeth, "I have compelled you to recognise my son-in-law as a true marquis; you came here and humbled yourselves before me, Benoît is forgotten, I am revenged. In eight days I shall leave for



Paris, and when I again set foot in Arlange the youngest amongst you will have turned grey! With regard to Master Gaston who is a true original, a residence in the Faubourg and intercourse with his equals will soon cure him of his ideas."

After the signing of the marriage contract, the wedding presents were displayed, at the sight of which all the women sided with Gaston. The poor fellow was besieged with compliments which he dared not decline; but he anticipated telling Lucile on the morrow, that it was not he she had to thank. When the notary unrolled his scroll, every one tried to get nearest to him, not to learn what Lucile's dowry was, for that was sufficiently well known, but to hear the enumeration of the marquis's estates. Public curiosity was greatly disappointed: M. d'Outreville married "with his rights."

On the day following, Lucile and Gaston resumed the chain of their pleasures; and the last days of the month passed as quickly as if they were hours. Oh the 31st of May, the two lovers were married at the mairie, and neither trembled when the time arrived to say "yes." When the mayor repeated for the hundredth time in his life that the wife must follow her husband, Madame Benoît made a very expressive sign to Lucile. On returning home, the triumphant mother-in-law said to the marquis in presence of Lucile: "My son-in-law (for you are really my son-in-law now), to-morrow I will give you your income for the next six months."

"A little patience, my charming mother!" replied Gaston; "what should I do with such a sum? Money," added he, looking at Lucile, "will for a long time be the least of my cares."

"Do not disdain this poor money: you will need a good deal in a few days, when you are in Paris."

"In Paris! What in the world should I do in Paris?"

"Obtain a footing, rally your friends and relations round

you, form a circle of acquaintances for the winter, and for the rest of your life."

"But, madame, I am determined not to live in Paris. It is an unhealthy town, where all the women are ill, where families die out from lack of children. Do you know that Paris would be a desert at the end of a century, if the country did not repeople it!"

"It is to prevent its becoming a desert that my daughter and I have decided to go there as soon as possible."

"You did not tell me so, mademoiselle."

Lucile lowered her eyes without speaking. Her mother's presence weighed on her. Madame Benoît quickly replied: "Such things are guessed without being told. My daughter is Marchioness d'Outreville; her placé is in the Faubourg St. Germain! Is it not so, Lucile?"

She answered an inaudible "yes" from the tips of her lips. It was not thus that she said "yes" at the mairie.

"The Faubourg," added Gaston, "the Faubourg, you are anxious to penetrate into the Faubourg!" Through some disappointment the secret of which no one ever knew, he bore an unjust and violent hatred towards the Faubourg. "Do you know, mademoiselle, what one sees in the Faubourg. Young girls as insipid as forced fruits; young women mad after dress and vanity; old women who have neither the imposing stiffness of our ancestors of the eighteenth century, or the wit and good temper of the contemporaries of Louis XV.; old men stupefied by whist; young men, at once fast livers and devotees, who mix up the names of race horses and preachers in their conversation; and men old enough to act, who indulge in unacceptable political ideas, factitious lamentations, and a faithfulness which exhibits itself in the hope that some one will purchase it; that, mademoiselle, is the Faubourg, you know it now as well as if you had seen it. What! you live in the midst of a magnificent forest, surrounded

by a population that loves you—I do not mention myself who adores you—possessing the wealth that enables you to make others happy, health without which nothing is worth having, domestic joys, summer amusements, and the more familiar pleasures of winter, with your present lit up by love, and the future peopled with little fair and rosy children, and you wish to abandon all this for a handful of empty compliments and a hundred ridiculous flatteries! It is not I who will be an accomplice to such a fatal exchange, and if you go to the Faubourg, mademoiselle, I shall not escort you thither!”

Whilst listening to this speech, Madame Benoît's face was like that of a child, who, having constructed a house with a pack of cards, beholds the foundation give way. She had hardly the strength to say to Lucile: “Why don't you answer?”

Lucile held out her hand to Gaston, and said, looking at her mother: “The wife must follow her husband.”

This time Gaston was less reserved than the Apollo Belvedere. He took Lucile in his arms and kissed her tenderly on her forehead. Madame Benoît spent the rest of the day in making plans, issuing orders and arranging the means of enticing her son-in-law to Paris.

The following day, after the marriage ceremony at the church, she took him aside and said: “Is it your last word? You will not introduce us into the Faubourg?”

“But, madame, did you not hear how willingly Lucile gave up the idea?”

“And supposing I do not give it up? If I told you that for thirty years (I am forty-two) I have longed to enter it? If I told you that the wish to hear myself announced in the drawing-rooms of the Rue St. Dominique caused me to wed a false marquis who beat me? If I added that I chose you as a husband for my daughter neither for your appearance nor your talents, but for your name, which is a key to open all doors?—

Do you think, my dear marquis, that I give you an income of a hundred thousand francs for you to waste your time in working?"

"Excuse me, madame. First of all, considering the present value of spotless names, I am vain enough to think that mine would be cheap at two millions. But this may pass, since you have given me nothing. The forge and the forest are Lucile's inheritance, the income that we are to allow you represents the interest of all the amounts you have brought into the enterprise, and of the two hundred thousand francs that the house in the Rue Saint-Dominique cost you. Thus I hold all from Lucile, and, with her, I am not at a loss as to how to acquit myself."

"But it is through me that you possess Lucile; it is from me that she holds you," exclaimed the poor woman, "and you are both very ungrateful if you refuse me my life's happiness!"

"You are right, madame; ask me anything in the world, excepting one thing; and there is nothing I will refuse you. But I have sworn never again to set foot in the Faubourg."

"Why in heaven's name did you not tell me so?"

"Because you did not ask me."

On leaving Gaston Madame Benoît said three words to her maid, and four to her coachman. She did not again speak to the marquis concerning the first instalment of his income.

In the evening at the ball, Lucile met with a great success. None of the ladies present recollected having seen a bride so perfectly happy. All the young men envied Gaston, according to custom; I shall not allow myself to say that any one envied Lucile. At two o'clock the last of the dancers left, but the bride and bridegroom had not retired: Madame Benoît had decided that they should close the ball as they had opened it. This wise mother, whose face was slightly clouded, asked as a favour to be allowed to spend a quarter

of an hour with her daughter, and she led her to the nuptial chamber, on the ground floor; whilst Gaston, who wished to rid himself of the dust raised by the dancers, returned for the last time to his small room upstairs. On coming down the grand staircase shortly afterwards, he was surprised to hear the noise of a carriage driven rapidly away. He entered the nuptial chamber: it was empty. He went to Madame Benoît's apartments; all the doors were open, and the rooms deserted. Satin shoes, two ball dresses, and a number of clothes lay on the floor. He rang the bell; no one answered. He went out into the hall, and found himself face to face with the clownish physiognomy of Jacquot, the little ostler.

He caught hold of him and said: "Did I not just hear a carriage drive off?"

"Yes, sir; you would be deaf—"

"Who is it that has gone away so late, after all have left?"

"Why, sir, it is madame and mademoiselle in the travelling coach, with fat Pierre and Mademoiselle Julie."

"All right. They said nothing? They have left nothing for me?"

"Excuse me, sir; madame left a letter."

"Where is it?"

"It is here, sir, in the lining of my cap."

"Give it me quickly, you animal!"

"I have put it quite at the bottom, you see, for fear of losing it. Here it is!"

Gaston ran and placed himself under the lamp in the hall and read the following note: "My dear marquis, in the hope that love and your own interest also, will tear you away from that dear Arlange, I take your wife and your money to Paris: come and fetch them."

## CHAPTER III.

GASTON crumpled up Madame Benoit's note and put it in his pocket. Then he turned towards Jacquet, who was staring stupidly at him and rolling his cap in his hands. "Did not the marchioness say anything to you?" he asked.

"Mademoiselle? no, sir; she did not even look at me."

"Is there a cross road to Dieuze?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does it shorten the way?"

"Yes, by a quarter of an hour at least."

"Saddle Forward and Indiana then. Wait! I will help you. You shall show me the way. A louis for yourself if we arrive before the carriage."

Half an hour later, Jacquet in a smock frock, and the marquis in wedding attire, drew up before the post-house at Dieuze. Jacquet awoko the ostler and asked if horses had been asked for during the night. The answer was that no traveller had called since the previous day.

"There," said the marquis to Jacquet, "are the twenty francs I promised you."

"Sir," timidly asked the little groom, "are louis no longer worth twenty-four francs?"

"It is a long time since they were, simpleton."

"My grandfather always told me there were twenty-four francs to the louis. In his time two louis and forty sous made exactly fifty francs."

Gaston did not answer; he was listening for the sound of the carriage coming from Arlange. Jacquet continued talking to himself: "How is it that these beautiful gold pieces have fallen so much in value?"

"Listen!" said the marquis; "do you not hear a carriage?"

"No, sir. Ah! it is very unlucky!"

"What is?"

"That gold louis should be worth only twenty francs."

"Take this other one, blockhead; and hold your tongue."

Jacquet did as he was told; but he contented himself with muttering between his teeth: "All the same, if a louis was still worth twenty-four francs, these two louis and the forty sous that madame gave me would make exactly fifty francs. But these are hard times, as my grandfather used to say."

Gaston waited fully an hour without dismounting. At last he feared that an accident had befallen the coach. Jacquet quieted him: "It is possible, sir," he remarked, "that the ladies may have reached the highway without passing through Dieuze."

"Let us follow them," said the marquis.

"It would be of no use, sir, they have nearly two hours start of us."

"Well! show me the way home by the road."

The house was just as Gaston had left it. The coach was not in the coach-house, and there were two horses missing from the stables. In the distance could be heard a sound of squeaking violins and discordant songs—the workmen and the peasants were dancing in the open air. Gaston's first care was to make sure of Jacquet's silence and to keep his nocturnal chase a secret. He could think of nothing better than sending his confidant to Paris. "Go and take the diligence for Nancy," said he. "At Nancy you can take the coach to Paris. When there you must ask some one to show you the way to the Hôtel d' Outreville, rue Saint Dominique, 57, and you will tell Madame Benoît that I shall arrive in two days' time. Here is the money to pay the fare."

"Sir," asked Jacquet in an insinuating tone, "if I were to walk there, would the money be for me?"

He received in answer a peremptory kick that helped him on in the direction of Paris.

Gaston, thoroughly tired out, went up to his room on the second floor and flung himself on his bed, not to sleep, but to think over his strange adventure more composedly. Lucile's flight, at the time when he thought himself most dear to her, appeared inexplicable. Evidently this departure was premeditated; it would have been impossible to arrange it in a quarter of an hour. But then, all the young wife's behaviour was a lie: the happiness that shone in her eyes, the soft pressure of her hand during the whirlwind of the waltz, the delicious words that she had whispered in his ear but an hour before, all was falsehood, lure and deception. Yet, if she did not love him, why did she marry him? It was so easy to say "no" instead of "yes"—her mother would not have forced her, for she favoured her flight. Gaston then recollected the animated conversation that he had held the same morning with Madame Benoît; he easily understood the widow's vexation and her revenge. But how had this ambitious mother managed to change her daughter's heart in less than a day? Why had not Lucile left a word of explanation for her husband? This thought naturally led him to feel in his pocket for Madame Benoît's note. He noticed a word which he had overlooked on his first perusal: "*Your wife and your money!*" Truly, it was far from being a question of money! As if money was anything to him who sees his life's happiness destroyed. Of what importance is a sum of money to one who has lost what cannot be bought at any price? "*Your wife and your money!*" The phrase bore a resemblance to that lugubrious joke of the law which condemns a man to death and to pay the costs of his trial. Gaston wrongly imagined that his mother-in-law had pur-



posely written the word to remind him of the modest position from which she had removed him, and his pride was hurt. After having perused the note several times, he persuaded himself that it would be shameful to start for Paris without one's knowing whether he went after his wife or his gold, and he decided to remain at Arlange so long as Lucile did not write to him.

This decision involved an outlay of wit and amiability which he had not foreseen. The news of the marchioness's departure had spread like wildfire; and as no one had ever heard of a wedding ending in like manner, all who had dined or merely dined at the house hastened there under the pretext of making a friendly call. The marquis received this tribe of inquisitive people in a manner which convinced the most exacting that he was a man of the world when he had time. During a week the drawing-room was always full, and he did not appear bored at having to pass half the day in it. This small crowd thirsting for scandal was amazed at his quiet manner, his natural voice, his happy and smiling countenance. He told all who cared to listen that for more than a fortnight Madame Benoît had had pressing business matters at Paris, which required her presence and that of her daughter; that, like a good mother, she had not wished to postpone Lucile's wedding on that account; that, like a wise director, she had desired to leave behind her a trustworthy person to manage the forge; that, like a kind and courteous hostess, she had not chosen to inconvenience her guests by the announcement of her approaching departure. If any one put on a condoling face and appeared to pity the victims of so untimely a separation, Gaston eagerly reassured the kind person by telling him that the husband, wife, and mother-in-law would shortly be reunited. Not satisfied with deceiving the inquisitive and malevolent, he took pains to charm them. He displayed all his natural and acquired

graces for their benefit, he established himself in the women's hearts, and in the men's esteem; he approved all their absurdities, listened to all their prejudices; he toadied his audience so successfully, that he conquered the whole district; such a thing may happen to the most honourable man. The first result of this farce was that he made a hundred and fifty intimate friends; the second was that all believed that his version of Madame Benoît's departure was true in every respect.

The real facts of the case are these: After the ball, Lucile, her heart oppressed with anxious joy, followed her mother into her room. She had hardly closed the door when Madame Benoît, by some slight of hand, stripped her of her white dress, enveloped her in a thick dressing gown, and threw a shawl round her shoulders, whilst Julie replaced her satin slippers with a pair of boots. Without giving her time to wonder at this toilet, her mother said to her hastily, whilst changing her own dress: "My darling, Gaston has given way to me, we start for Paris immediately."

"Already? He has not yet said a word to me about it!"

"It is a surprise that he had in store for you, dear child, for to tell the truth, you know you regretted a little bit not being able to see that beautiful Paris!"

"No, mamma, not at all."

"You did regret it, my dear; I know you better than you know yourself."

Some one knocked gently at the door. Madame Benoît started. "Who is there?" she asked.

"Madame," was answered in Pierre's voice, "the coach is ready."

The widow hurried her daughter to the carriage. "Quick, quick," said she; "our people are dancing; if they heard of our departure we should have to undergo all their farewells."

"But I should have liked to have wished them good-bye," murmured Lucile. Her mother placed her inside the coach and jumped in after her. "And Gaston?" asked the young wife, quite upset by these precipitate movements.

"Come, my child. Pierre, where is the marquis?"

Pierre knew his lesson by heart. He answered without hesitation: "Madame, the marquis is having the luggage put on to the old post-chaise. He begs madame to wait a minute or two for him."

Lucile, prompted by some secret inspiration, tried to open the door on her side; but either by accident or otherwise she could not move it. To reach the other, she would have had to pass over her mother. Her courage did not go so far as that: "Julie," said she to the maid, "go and see what the marquis is doing."

Julie, who had been in Madame Benoît's service for fifteen years, went away, came back, and replied: "Madame, the marquis does not wish you to wait for him. A shaft has broken; they are mending it; he will join you at the relay." At the same moment Pierre approached the other door, and Madame Benoît whispered to him: "Take the cross road; avoid Dieuze, and drive straight on to Moyenvic!"

The carriage drove off at a quick pace. It was really a strange wedding night. Madame Benoît was highly delighted at leaving Arlange and nearing the Faubourg accompanied by a genuine marchioness. She complained of weariness, of headache, and closing her eyes she ensconced herself in a corner of the coach, for fear that her daughter's remarks should disturb the tumultuous joy which bubbled up in her heart. The poor bride, without fearing the chill of the night air, stretched her head out of the window, listening to the murmur of the wind, and straining her tearful eyes into the darkness. At the relay at Moyenvic, Madame Benoît unmasked herself and said to her daughter: "Do not strain

your eyes looking for your husband. You will only see him at the Faubourg St. Germain."

Lucile divined the treachery ; but she was too much afraid of her mother to answer her otherwise than with tears.

"Your husband," continued the widow, "is an obstinate fellow who refused to introduce you into the world. It is in your interest that I intend to compel him to. He will rejoin you in four-and-twenty hours if he loves you. There is no need for you to weep like Agar in the desert. I am your mother, I know better than you do what suits you ; I take you to Paris and save you from Arlange."

"Oh, my poor happiness !" exclaimed the child, wringing her hands.†

"What do you complain of? You love him, you have married him. You are a bride! What more do you want?"

"So," replied Lucile, "this is what marriage is! Ah! I was far happier as a girl, for then I at least saw my husband!"

From Arlange to Paris she did not tire of looking out of the window. It seemed to her impossible that Gaston was not in hot pursuit. In every carriage that raised the dust on the road, on all the galloping horses that neared the coach, she thought she recognised her husband. This journey that was almost stifling her mother with joy, was for her an endless series of hopes and disappointments. Paris, without Gaston, appeared to her an immense wilderness, and the Faubourg St. Germain, abandoned by half its inhabitants, was like a desert within a desert. The day following her arrival, the first thing she saw on opening her window was Jacquet's face. She ran down stairs in less than a second. Gaston must surely be in Paris! She learnt, that though he had not arrived, he would not tarry long, and I leave you to imagine whether she made much of the bearer of such good news. Whilst Madame Benoît still slept the sleep of the

happy, Jacquet related the least details of the journey to Dieuze. "How he loves me!" thought Lucile. I even think that she thought aloud.

"To end the story," continued Jacquet, "the marquis, I think, owes me eight francs."

"Here are twenty, my good Jacquet."

"Thank you very much, mademoiselle. I am not positively certain about what I say; but I think that he owes them me. I had reckoned that he owed me twenty-four francs, and he gave me but twenty: therefore it was four francs less. Then again he gave me but twenty, therefore it was again four francs less. And as four and four make eight—However, I may be mistaken, and if you wish me to return—?"

"Keep them, keep them, my lad, and go and rest after your journey."

She ran into the garden and gathered flowers as though for the Fête Dieu, so that her room might be pretty on Gaston's arrival. Jacquet watched her go saying to himself: "Sixty-two francs is an unlucky sum, as my grandfather used to say." And he reckoned on his fingers how many more gold louis and pieces of forty sous it would take to make a hundred francs. The day passed, and the next day, and a whole week, without news of the marquis. Madame Benoît was hiding her vexation; Lucile dared not give way to her sorrow before her mother; but both made up for it, the one in storming, and the other in weeping, during the night. From morn till eve the mother drove her daughter about in a carriage with armorial bearings, but without footmen or powder, for the celebrated family coach was still at the builder's. She took her to the Bois de Boulogne, to the Champs Elysées, and to every place where the fashionable world congregated, so as to give her an inclination for those vain pleasures that one meets with but in Paris. It not

being the season for the Italian opera, she made her pass most weary evenings at the Théâtre-Français and at the French Opera. But Lucile neither enjoyed seeing nor being seen. Wherever her mother took her, she carried with her a longing to return home, and the hope of finding Gaston there.

Madame Benoît understood, long before her daughter did, that the marquis was sulking. As she was not wanting in spirit, she soon made up her mind how to act: "Ah!" thought she, "my son-in-law manages to do without us! Let us try to do without him. What was it that I required to be able to mix in the society of the Faubourg? A coat-of-arms and a name: I had the rest. To-day nothing is wanting; we have a magnificent crest on our carriages, we are Marchioness d'Outreville, and we may go everywhere. But where shall we begin? That is the question. Lucile cannot go without any preamble and say to people who do not know her: 'Open your doors to me, I am the Marchioness d'Outreville!' Ah! I have it! I will call on my good, my excellent debtors! They will receive me on another footing than last time; one may treat cavalierly a tradesman's daughter, but one has some consideration for a marchioness's mother." Her first visit was to the Baron de Subresac. She did not take Lucile to see him nor to see her other debtors. Where was the use of showing the child what it costs to open a door?

"Ah! dear baron," remarked she on entering, "to what accursed madman have we given my daughter!"

The baron did not expect such an exordium. "Madame," replied he somewhat too sharply, "the madman who has done you the honour of becoming your son-in-law is the noblest fellow I have ever known."

"Oh, goodness! if you only knew what he has done. Married only eight days ago, he has already deserted his wife!" She then proceeded to relate all the facts you know

and which the baron ignored. As she spoke a smile returned to the baron's lips. When she had told all, he took her hands and said gaily: "You are right, my charmer, the marquis is very guilty; he has deserted his wife as Menelaus abandoned his."

"Sir, Menelaus pursued Helen, and I maintain that a husband who lets his wife go away without following her, deserts her."

"Happily this instance is not so serious, for I see no Paris looming in the distance. You will take your daughter back to her husband; it is your duty, for one must not separate those whom God has united. These children worship one another, happiness will seem to them all the sweeter for having been delayed. You will take part in their joy, you will rejoice at the sight of their love, and before ten months are past you will send me news of them."

The pretty widow held out her hand and made with her forefinger an expressive sign that signified: "Never!"

"But then," continued the baron, "what do you intend to do?"

"Can I reckon on your friendship, baron?"

"Have I not already shown you that you may do so, my charmer?"

"And I shall remember it as long as I live. If your goodwill does not fail me, I can do without the marquis for ever."

"Do you think that the young marchioness would say as much?"

"We are not occupied with her just now. Parents in good truth ought to be considered before their children. What do I ask of providence and mankind? The ruin of the Faubourg. Now all that is necessary to attain that end is, for Lucile to be introduced there. She has every conceivable right, and she merely needs an introduction to be able to enter everywhere. Will you refuse to introduce her?"

“Absolutely. First of all, because this honour belongs more to a baroness than to a baron. Again, because I will not contribute to the delay of Gaston’s happiness. And, finally, because all my good-will would be of no use to you. Your daughter has doubtless the right to enter everywhere, but why? because she is Gaston’s wife. As such she will be welcomed in all the houses where her husband is known, that is to say, in the whole Faubourg. But do you think I should show much tact in introducing her and saying: ‘Ladies and gentlemen, you love and esteem the Marquis d’Outreville; you are either his relations, his connections or his friends: allow me, therefore, to introduce to you his wife, who refuses to live with him!’ Believe me, my charmer, it is an experience seventy-five years old that speaks to you; a young wife never looks well without her husband, and the mother who takes her about thus, alone, away from her home, does not play a part approved of by the world. If you really wish to elbow duchesses, go and endeavour by fair means to get your son-in-law to bring you back to Paris. Your frolic has hurt his feelings; that is why he does not join you. If you are expecting him here, I know him sufficiently well to prophesy that you will wait long for him. Return to Arlange. Do not be prouder than Mahomed: the mountain would not come to him, therefore he modestly went to the mountain.”

It was well said, but Madame Benoît was not convinced. Though it was past twelve o’clock in the day she called on five or six of her debtors. All were aware of her daughter’s marriage, but not one expressed a wish to make the young lady’s acquaintance. They talked a good deal about the marquis; they described him as a gallant man, they praised his intelligence, they regretted his misanthropy, and they enquired whether he would spend the winter in Paris. The widow tried in vain to repeat the petition she had made to M. de Subresac; she was not allowed an opportunity. She



did not, however, give up hope, and determined soon to make a fresh attempt. Besides, she still had a final resource, a safety anchor that she kept in reserve and intended to use in the last extremity: the Countess de Malésy. The countess was the woman who owed her the most, and consequently the one from whom she expected much. She was a nice little old woman of sixty, whose only faults were a little coquetry, a little gluttony, too great a love for cards, and a mad habit of throwing money out of the window. Madame Benoît thought, with reason, that a person who had so many faults could not be invulnerable, and that by some means or other she would be able to reach her heart. She already began to enjoy the baron's surprise at meeting her in society between Lucile and Madame de Malésy.

Whilst she was paying her useless calls, the pretty Marchioness d'Outreville shut herself up in her room, and, without consulting any one, wrote the following letter to her husband:—

“What are you doing, Gaston? When will you come? You promised to join us. How could you remain ten long days without seeing me? When we were together in that dear Arlange you could not leave me for an hour. Oh! how long the hours seem in Paris! Mamma is always speaking against you, but at the mere mention of your name my heart beats so loudly that I cannot hear her. She says that you have deserted me; you may be sure that I do not believe it. For, in truth, I am no uglier than when you knelt before me; and if I am older it is not by many days. All is not ended between us, the last word is not spoken, and I feel that I can still give you some happiness. You are not the man to close so good a book on reading the first page. For myself, since I have had you no longer by me, I feel so dull and am pining away. Imagine that at times I think I am

no more your wife, and that that beautiful ceremony in the church and that ball, where we were so happy, were but a dream which has too soon ended. But the kiss you gave me was not a dream. I have received many kisses on the forehead since my birth, but none that made such an impression on my heart. It is doubtless because that one came from you. All that belongs to you has something particular that I cannot define: for instance, your voice is more penetrating than any other: no one ever could say 'Lucile' as you do.

"Why are you not here, dear Gaston? That kiss you gave me, I should be so happy to be able to return it! It would not be wrong, would it, as I am your wife? You cannot imagine how I miss you. When I go out with mamma, I look for you in the streets: all I know of Paris as yet is that you are not there. At night, I regularly mix up your name with my prayers; on awaking, in the morning, I look to see whether you are not near me. Is it possible that I think of you so much and that you have forgotten me? Perhaps you are vexed at my having left you so suddenly, and without saying farewell. If you only knew! It was not I who left; it was mamma who carried me off. I thought that you were going to overtake us in the old post-chaise which brought the luggage; mamma assured me that you would, Pierre and Julie also. Ah! I wept very much when I learnt they had told me a falsehood. Since then I could cry all day, if I did not restrain myself; but I keep back my tears, partly to avoid being scolded, but also so that you may not find me with swollen eyes. You must not be angry at my not having written sooner; you had sent word that you were coming, and when one expects any one one does not write to him. Now, I shall write to you until I have seen you; I cannot have much pride, for I write like a kitten, and hardly know how to connect my sentences. It is because I have never before written to any one, having neither uncles, aunts, nor

school friends. I hope that you will not make me exhaust my stock of fine phrases, and that you will leave at my first request. Come, leave the forge and business : there is no longer any business in the world so long as we are separated. I will reconcile you with mamma, on condition that she promises all you wish, and that she does not ask you to do anything disagreeable. If living in Paris is as distasteful to you as it is to me, rest assured that we will not remain there long. But if you do not come, what will become of me ? It would be easy enough for me to leave the house one day when mamma goes out without me ; but I cannot run along the highroads all alone ! However, if you wish it, I will run away ; I will place myself under Jacquet's protection. But something tells me that you will not need to be supplicated, and that you will not keep me waiting for you long.

"Think only of two little red hands that are held out towards you !"

Madame Benoît returned whilst Jacquet was taking this letter to the post.

"You have not been dull, all alone ?" asked the mother of her daughter.

"No, mamma," answered the marchioness.

#### IV.

THE three following days were days of expectation. Lucile awaited Gaston as if he had already received her letter ; Madame Benoît hoped that her noble debtors would return her calls. Both mother and daughter therefore remained at home, but not together. The one sat at a window in the drawing-room with her eyes fixed upon the door of the house ;

the other wandered under the chestnut trees, her eyes turned towards the future. Madame Benoît reckoned that her luxury would procure her friends ; she anticipated showing her beautiful rooms on the ground floor. " We shall indeed be unlucky," thought she, " if meanwhile no one offers us a cup of tea ; one willingly offers to those who can repay." The drawing-room, full of dazzling flowers, bore a festive appearance ; from morn till eve the mistress of the house sat there, dressed in all her finery, like the Russian officers who never take off their uniforms, and Jacquet transformed by a gorgeous livery, performed in the hall a footman's duties.

Sensitive hearts will be sorry to learn that all this expense was wasted ; no noble debtor called on Madame Benoît. The fact is these ladies and gentlemen had all acquired the habit of never paying her, either in money or politeness, and of never returning anything to her, not even her calls. She was meditating sadly, behind the curtain, upon the ingratitude of mankind, when a brougham drove quickly into the court-yard. The pretty widow's heart beat fast ; it was the first time that any carriage but her own had stopped in front of her door. A young man got out ! He was not a debtor, he was a hundred times better, the Count de Preux in person ! He entered the hall, and Madame Benoît with the quickness of lightning, passed her drawing-room in review, gave a look to her dress, and prepared the first words she would have to say. The count was some time coming up ; she inwardly cursed Jacquet, who was doubtless keeping him waiting in the ante-room. Why was not the door opened ? She would have gone to meet her noble visitor if she had not feared to make herself ridiculous by showing an excess of politeness. At last, the tapestry in front of the door was moved aside, a man entered, it was Jacquet. " Show the gentleman in," exclaimed the widow breathlessly.

"Who, madame?" inquired Jacquet, in that drawling tone which is characteristic of the peasants of Lorraine.

"The count!"

"Ah! he is a count, is he? Well, there he is in the courtyard."

Madame Benoît ran to the window and saw M. de Preux regain his carriage without looking back, and give an order to his coachman. "Run after him," said she to Jacquet. "What did he say to you?"

"Madame, he is a very nice man, not at all proud. He has probably just come from the country, for he thought the marquis was here. I told him he was not, that is all."

"Idiot, did you not say that madame was at home?"

"Yes, madame, I did; but he did not seem to hear."

"You should have said so again."

"I hadn't time; he at once began to ask me when the marquis would return. It is probable that he wished to speak to monsieur."

"What did you reply?"

"Oh! that one did not quite know what to say as regards monsieur; that he did not seem to intend to return; and then, as the gentleman was not at all proud, and as he seemed to like talking with me, I told him of the good joke that madame and mademoiselle had played on monsieur."

"Fool, I dismiss you! be off! How much is owing to you?"

"I do not know, madame."

"How much do you earn a month?"

"Nine francs, madame. Do not dismiss me! I have done nothing! I will never do it again!" And Jacquet burst into tears.

"How long is it since you were last paid?"

"Two months, madame. What is to become of me, if you dismiss me?"

"Come here, here are your eighteen francs. Here are twenty more that I give you, so that you may have time to look out for a situation. Go!"

Jacquet took the money, looked to see if the amount was correct, and then, falling on his knees, exclaimed: "Mercy, Madame! I am not wicked! I have never hurt any one!"

"Master Jacquet, learn that stupidity is the worst of all vices."

"Why so, madame?" howled Jacquet.

"Because it is the only one which one cannot amend."

She pushed him out and threw herself into an arm-chair. Jacquet left the house, taking, like Bias the philosopher, all his fortune with him. If any one had followed him, one would have heard him mutter in a plaintive voice: "Sixty-two and eight makes seventy; and ten eighty; and twenty, a hundred. But I have killed the goose: I shall have no more eggs!"

Lucile heard of Jacquet's discharge at dinner, but she dared not ask the reason of it. Both mother and daughter, the one sorrowing and anxious, the other sulky and cross, were eating but little, without saying anything, when the servant brought in a letter for Madame d'Outreville. "From Gaston!" she exclaimed. Unhappily, it was not; the envelope bore the Passy postmark. It was Madame Céline Jordy, *née* Mélier who recalled herself to her friend's remembrance. Lucile read out aloud:

"My pretty countrywoman, I address you letters, both to our village and to Paris; for since your marriage I have not heard from you, and do not know what has become of you. As for myself, I am happy, happy, happy! there you have my history in three words. If you want more precise details, come and fetch them, or tell me where you are hiding yourself. Robert is the most perfect of all men

excepting Gaston d'Outreville, whom I shall know when you have shown him to me. When shall I be able to embrace you? I have a thousand secrets that I can tell to none but you: have you not been for sixteen years my only confidant? I am curious to know if you will recognise me without my being obliged to write my name on my hat. You also must be greatly altered. We were both so childish but a short time ago: you a fortnight back and I three weeks! Come to-morrow, if you are in Paris; when you can, if you are at Arlange. I like to think that we shall not be like marchionesses, but that we shall see each other as often as possible, without counting our visits. I long to show you my house: it is the most charming nest which has ever been built for a citizen. You may humiliate me afterwards with the sight of your palace; but I must see you. I will! That is a word that nobody disobeys at Passy, 16 Rue des Tilleuls. Good-bye. I kiss you without knowing where you are, like a blind woman.

“CÉLINE.”

“Dear Céline! I will go and spend the day with her to-morrow. You will not want me, mamma?”

“No, I am also going out to see a friend.”

“Who is it, mamma?”

“You do not know her: the Countess de Malésy.”

Madame Benoît had not seen this venerable old friend, on whom her last hopes rested, for twelve or thirteen years. She found her but little changed. The countess had become deaf, through constantly hearing the complaints of her creditors; but it was an obliging sort of deafness, even slightly malicious, that allowed her to hear just what she chose. Besides that, she could see well and was gifted with a good appetite. Madame de Malésy recognised her pretty creditor and received her with a touching familiarity.

"Good morning, little one, good morning!" said she. "I did not refuse to see you. You have too much sense to come and ask me for money?"

"Oh! madame, I have never yet paid you a business call."

"Dear little one! her father's image! Ah! my child, Lopinot was a worthy fellow."

"You overwhelm me, countess."

"Can you understand any one's coming and ask money of a poor woman like myself? It is not yet a year since I married my daughter to the Marquis de Croix-Maugars. It was a good match, I admit; but that marriage almost cost me my eyes." Mademoiselle de Malésy had not a sou of dowry.

"I have just married my daughter to the Marquis d'Outreville."

"What's that you say? How do you call him?"

Madame Benoît made an ear trumpet of her two hands and shouted: "The Marquis d'Outreville."

"Yes, yes, I hear; but what Outreville? There are the genuine and the false Outrevilles; and there are not many left of the genuine ones."

"He is all right."

"Are you quite sure? Is he well off?"

"He had nothing."

"So much the better for you! The false ones are fearfully rich; they have bought the château and grounds, and they have taken the name into the bargain. What sort of nose has he?"

"Who?"

"Your son-in-law."

"A Roman nose."

"I congratulate you then. The false Outrevilles are awfully ugly fellows, with straight noses."

"He is the one who was at the Ecole Polytechnique."



"Oh! I know him! He is slightly cracked: he is a real one. But now, you who are a sensible woman, tell me why he made such a fool of himself."

It was Madame Benoît who now turned a deaf ear. The countess continued: "I said, why was he such a fool as to marry your daughter? Is she then very rich?"

"She had a dowry of a hundred thousand francs a year. We citizens have kept up the habit of giving dowries to our daughters." A slap at the countess.

"Nevertheless, I should never have expected that of him. I thought he had more sense. You understand, little one, that I should not say this if he were here; but between ourselves—What do you want, Rosine?"

"The collector has called from the Bon-Saint-Louis, madame," answered the maid.

"I am not at home! Those people of the Bon-Saint-Louis are unbearable. Ah! little one, your father was a gallant man! I was saying that the marquis will be blamed by all. No one will upbraid him to his face; his name is his own, he can drag it where he chooses. But a true Outreville ought not to—to marry below—What is it now, Rosine?"

"M. Majou is there, madame."

"I am not at home. I have gone out for the day; I have just left for the country. Did one ever see such a wine merchant? Creditors of the present day are worse than beggars; no matter how often one dismisses them, they always return! Ah! little one, your father was a saint! At least, is your daughter pretty?"

"I shall have the pleasure of introducing her to you one afternoon, madame. My son-in-law is away on our estate."

"Very well, bring her to see me some morning. I am always at home till twelve. Again, Rosine! is there then a procession to-day?"

"It is M. Bouniol, madame."

"Tell him that the doctor is applying leeches to me."

"I have already told him, madame, that you were out. He says that he has already come five times in eight days without seeing madame, and that, if you will not receive him, he will not come again."

"Very well, show him in, I will teach him how to behave. You will excuse me, little one? We have to assist at reviews. Ah! my dear, your father was a great man!"

Madame Benoît muttered softly as she regained her carriage: "Jest on, jest on, impertinent old woman! you have debts, I have money: you are in my power! Should it cost me five hundred louis you shall lead me by the hand into the middle of your daughter's drawing-room!" It was with these feelings that she took leave of her friend.

Lucile had long since been in the arms of hers. She left the house at eight, and an hour afterwards stopped in front of the handsomest house in the Rue des Tilleuls. The morning was splendid; the house and garden were bathed in the sun's rays. The garden in full bloom resembled an immense bouquet; a lawn studded with deep red roses was framed with a circle of yellow flowers, like a blood-stone jasper mounted in gold. A large acacia dropped its blossoms on the neighbouring shrubs and exhaled to the morning breeze its intoxicating odours. The blackbirds with their yellow beaks sang whilst flying from tree to tree; the wrens hopped about amongst the branches of the hawthorn, and the most forward chaffinches pursued one another in the gravel walks. The house, built in red bricks embellished with white stucco, seemed to smile upon all the luxury around it. All that climbs and flowers, bloomed and climbed on its walls. The wistaria with its purple clusters, the bignonia with its long red flowers, the white jasmine, the passion flower, the aristolochia with its broad leaves, and the virginian creeper which blushes at the last smile of autumn,

spread to the roof their stems intertwined. Large clusters of convolvuli surrounded the doorway with their flowers, and the blue bells of the cobœa bedecked every window. This sight brought back to the marchioness's mind the sweetest remembrances of Arlango: at that moment she would willingly have given up for nothing her house in the Rue Saint-Dominique, with its narrow garden in which the flowers gradually died between the heavy shadow of the house, and the thick foliage of the old chestnut trees. The sight of a cream-coloured dressing-gown half hidden by a bed of rhododendrons, soon put an end to her dreams. She ran, and only stopped when she found herself in Madame Jordy's arms.

Have you ever noticed the meeting of Orestes and Pylades on the stage? However skilful the actors may be, this scene is always slightly ridiculous. That is because man's friendship is, by nature, neither expansive nor graceful. A good shake of the hand, an arm grotesquely passed round a neck, or the ridiculous rubbing of one beard against another, are not spectacles made to charm the eyes. How much more graceful is a woman's greeting, and the most awkward are great artists in friendship! Céline was a short fair woman, plump and chubby, with an arched forehead, and turned-up nose, constantly showing her teeth that were white and sharp like those of a young dog, laughing for no other reason than the pleasure of living, weeping without sorrow, changing countenance twenty times in an hour, and always pretty without any one's ever having been able to say why. Happily for the narrator of this truthful story, beauty is not subject to definition; for it would be quite impossible for him to tell you by what spell Mademoiselle Méliet bewitched her husband and all who have seen her. She had nothing remarkable excepting the roundness of her waist, the perfection of her bust, the brightness of her complexion, and

two tiny dimples that I shall never forget, though they were not placed with desirable regularity.

Lucile did not in the least resemble Madame Jordy, and if friendship lives on contrasts, their intimacy was likely to be everlasting. The young marchioness was a head taller than her friend, and not near so stout. I have already mentioned that her youth was prolonged. Picture to yourself the thin and nervous beauty of Diana. Have you ever seen in M. Corot's admirable landscapes those nymphs with slim bodies and slender waists, who dance in a circle under the tall trees, holding one another by the hand? If the Marchioness d'Outreville had joined in their games, with no other clothing than a tunic, and no other headdress than a gold arrow in her hair, the life-like circle would open to admit her, and would continue the dance with one more sister added to the group. Through one of fancy's whims, the queen of the forest of Arlange wore, that morning, a hat of white crape and a dress of pink taffeta; the plump little citizen was clad like a true inhabitant of the woods: in a straw hat and flowing clothes.

"How kind of you to come!" said she to the marchioness. Spare my mentioning the numberless kisses with which the two friends interrupted their conversation. "I have been dreaming of you. How long have you been in Paris, my beauty?"

"Ever since the morrow of my wedding."

"A fortnight lost for me! but that is frightful."

"If I had but known where to find you!" murmured the poor little marchioness. "I longed so to see you."

"And I! First of all, look at me straight in the face. Do I look like a married woman? Will any one ever call me mademoiselle now?"

"Well, really, you seem a great deal bolder; you have a serious look—"

"Not another word, or I shall die of laughter. And you! let me see! You are always the same. Good morning, mademoiselle!"

"Your servant, madame."

"Madame! what a pretty word! If you are very good at lunch, I will call you madame at dessert. Do you remember the time Lucile when we used to play at being madames?"

"It is not sufficiently long ago for me to have forgotten it."

"Come, mademoiselle, I will take you round my garden. You must not touch the flowers!" Whilst speaking, she plucked a large nosegay of flowers behind which she entirely disappeared.

"I must ask you to have pity on your beautiful garden," exclaimed Lucile.

"In the first place, I forbid you calling it my beautiful garden. Every one sees it, every one enters it, it is everybody's garden! my beautiful garden is over there, behind that wall. There are but two persons who walk in it, Robert and I; you shall be the third. Come; you see that green gate? Let us see who will reach it first!"

She started off, Lucile followed, and soon passed her. Madame Jordy on arriving took a small key from her pocket and opened the gate. "This," said she, "is our private park. These lime trees, whose blossoms have wings, flower only for us. We walk here by ourselves every morning before the business hour, for we are early birds; I have kept to the good habits I acquired at Arlange. As for Robert, I don't know how he sets about it, but no matter how early I awake, I always find him leaning on the pillow, and busily occupied in watching me sleep. Come a little this way. Here the late proprietor had built a large damp grotto, lined with rocks and shells, with a plaster Apollo in the centre,

and toads all about. Robert had it nearly all pulled down, so as to give light and air here. It was he who brought those creepers, hung up those hammocks, and placed that pretty table and those armchairs here. He has as much taste as an angel; he is architect, upholsterer, gardener, everything! Just sit down a little while on this moss. No, I was forgetting your new dress. I always wear this in the morning: with that one can sit down anywhere. Let us go!"

"Not just yet! It is so comfortable under these lovely trees!"

"We will come back here by-and-bye to lunch. Now come and see our house. After that I will show you my husband; he is at the factory now. You will see, my Lucile, how handsome he is! Do you recollect how we used to jest about our ideals? My ideal was a tall, dark man, with a curly moustache, and eyebrows as black as ink. Well, my dear, my husband is not the least like that, not the least. He is no taller than papa; his hair is auburn, he has a pretty fair beard, soft as silk, for it has never known a razor. Now, I think that my ideal was hideous, and if I met him in the street I should be frightened. Robert is gentle, chivalrous and tender; he sometimes weeps, my dear! Yesterday evening, he was sitting near me; we were making plans; I was setting forth my ideas on the education of children. He let me go on talking all by myself and hid his face in his hands, as though thinking. When I had finished, he kissed me without saying anything, and I felt a tear fall on my cheek. How beautiful are men's tears! Manma is very fond of me, but she never loved me as much as that. What you will never believe is that with men he is proud, stiff and even terrible at times. I have been told that last year our workmen wished to strike to obtain some augmentation of wages. He heard of the conspiracy in time; he went

straight to the ring-leaders, in the midst of fifty or sixty men who were all against him, and he forced them to resume their work. Every one in the house fears him, excepting myself; see if I have not cause to be proud! It seems as if it were I who direct all the people who obey him. O my Lucile, what an admirable thing marriage is! On the eve we were two, the morrow we are but one; we have all in common, we are the two halves of the same soul: we hold together like the Siamese twins, who could not be separated without dying. 'This is our bed-room; what do you think of it? He chose the hangings for me like a dress: blue, in honour of my fair hair. After all, what are hangings? a dress that clothes us from a distance. You, my dark beauty with black eyes, you probably have a room hung with pink satin."

"I think so," answered Lucile dreamingly.

"How? you think! You answer like an Englishwoman. But I am also English to a certain extent. Do not imagine that every one enters here as in the street! I have some discretion and delicacy, and if you were not yourself, you would not be sitting in that arm-chair. Do you know that I make my bed myself? it is true that Robert helps me a little."

Lucile did not answer. She was contemplating with a pensive eye a magnificent mass of lace and embroidery in the midst of which two large pillows rested in a matrimonial manner side by side. The door opened, and M. Jordy entered carelessly, throwing his straw hat aside. On seeing Lucile he stopped amazed and bowed respectfully. His wife embraced him without ceremony and said to him, pointing to the marchioness with a graceful and simple gesture: "Robert, it is Lucile!"

That was the whole introduction. M. Jordy paid Lucile a little compliment which showed that he had often heard of

her, and that to him she was no stranger. He sat down and his wife managed to slip near him. "Is he not handsome?" she asked the marchioness. "But from whence does he come? He must have been running; he is in such a state of perspiration." And with a gesture as quick as her words she passed a cambric handkerchief over the young man's forehead, who tried in vain to prevent it. M. Jordy was more worldly than his wife; but it was useless for him to make angry faces at her, the little Arlange savage put both her hands on his eyes and impudently kissed the closed lids. "Do not scold me," said she; "Lucile has only been married a fortnight, that is to say she is as silly as we are."

The clock struck twelve; it was lunch-time. They ran to the garden and sat down gaily under those beautiful lime trees, which had given their name to the neighbouring street. No servant assisted at the meal; they waited on each other. The two friends, brought up in their native village, and strangers to the freaks of a Parisian education, were no water-drinkers; they dipped their lips in a straw-coloured wine, that M. Jordy fetched from a neighbouring streamlet, in which the bottles had been placed to keep cool. Robert easily pleased the marchioness; without being devoid of mind or education, he was simple, kind-hearted, and of the stuff which makes the staunchest friends. Besides, we all feel a natural sympathy for those foreheads upon which happiness beams: it is only selfish people who do not like happy ones. Céline who wished to show off her husband made him sing at dessert. He chose one of Béranger's most beautiful songs, though the old poet was no longer in fashion then. The birds, awakened in the midst of their siesta, performed a joyful accompaniment overhead. Lucile also sang, without being entreated, words which were not Italian. They joked as well-bred people joke; talked of everything and every one, excepting their neighbours and the last



theatrical success; laughed immoderately, but no one noticed that the marchioness's mirth was slightly feverish. "Why is not M. d'Outreville here?" Madame Jordy remarked, "two can love each other well; but when there are four there is a competition!"

At two o'clock M. Jordy went back to his business, and the two friends resumed the course of their confidences. Céline talked without ceasing and without noticing that she was soliloquising. Women are marvellously organised for microscopic operations; they excel in detailing their joys and sorrows. Lucile, agitated and breathless, listened, learnt, and divined, and at times, also, did not understand. She was like a sailor thrown by the storm on an enchanted island, the language of which he does not understand. The dinner hour was drawing near; Céline still talked on, and Lucile listened.

"As for children," the young wife was saying, "it is to be hoped that they will come soon. Do you ever think of them, Lucile? Love has but a short time to live; twenty years at the most; and three weeks have already passed by! our children's love is another thing: it lasts as long as we do, and closes our eyes. You know that formerly I was not over religious, but now, when I think that our children are in God's hands, I become superstitious. What do you wish for? a son or a daughter?"

"But—I have not yet thought about it."

"You must think of it, my beauty. If you do not think of it, who will think for you? I wish for a son. Listen to the words I have added to my prayers: "Holy virgin, if my heart seems pure enough to you, bless my love, and obtain for me the happiness of having a son that I may teach him to fear God, to love all that is good and beautiful, and all the duties of a man and a Christian."

This last shaft was too much for poor Lucile. The flood

of tears that she had for a long time been keeping back, burst forth, and inundated her pretty face.

"You are crying! exclaimed Céline. Have I hurt your feelings?"

"Ah, Céline, I am very unhappy; mamma forced me to leave home on my wedding-night, and I have not seen my husband since the ball!"

"The wedding-night? Since the ball? Mercy!" All at once Madame Jordy's face took a serious expression. "But it is treachery!" said she. "Why did you not tell me all that sooner? Since this morning I have been talking to you as to a woman, and you are but a child! You should have stopped me at the first word, and I would never forgive you for having let me speak, if you were not so unhappy."

Lucile briefly related her story. "And why did you not write to your husband?" asked Céline.

"I did write to him."

"When?"

"Four days ago."

"Well, my child, do not weep any more; he will arrive to-night."

At dinner, the table was elegant, the dining-room light and gay, the last rays of the sun were playing with the blinds and shutters, the straw-coloured wine smiled in the glasses, and M. Jordy watched with a radiant look his wife's pretty face; but Céline preserved the gravity of a Roman matron, and, I think, (Lord, forgive me!) that she addressed her husband in a very cold manner. The marchioness left at ten o'clock. Céline and her husband saw her to her carriage. On perceiving the coachman, Madame Jordy had a sudden inspiration. "Peter," asked she in an indifferent manner, "has the marquis arrived?"

"Yes, madame,"

The marchioness threw herself into her friend's arms, and uttered a cry.

"What is the matter?" asked Robert.

"Nothing," answered Céline.

## Y.

ON receiving Lucile's letter, Gaston did what any other man would have done in his place, he kissed the signature a thousand times, and started at once for Paris. Fate, that amuses itself with us like a little girl with her dolls, caused him to enter the d'Outreville house on a Tuesday evening, a fortnight, day for day, after the wedding. With a little good will on his part, he might imagine that the first fortnight of June had been a bad dream, and that he was just awakening, stiff from fatigue, by his wife's side. This time his mind was fully made up, he had courageously armed himself against Madame Benoit's maternal despotism, and he swore to protect his property, even to the last extremity.

He had not opened the door of his post-chaise, before Julie presented herself before Madame Benoit, and exclaimed, "Madame, madame! the marquis has arrived!"

The widow, who did not know that her daughter had written to Arlange, thought she had won the battle. She answered with ill-concealed joy: "There is no need to call out like that. I expected him."

"I was not aware of it, madame; and seeing what took place a fortnight ago, I thought that madame would like to know at once. Madame is at home then for the marquis?"

"Certainly! go! run! what are you bothering about?"

"I beg pardon, madame; but they are unloading the marquis's luggage. Is he going to live here?"

“And where would you have him to live? Go and look after his luggage.”

“Excuse me, madame; but where shall it be put?”

“Where? why, idiot that you are! in the marchioness's room, of course. Is not a husband's place by his wife?”

Gaston came to his mother-in-law all covered with dust, and his first look was for the absent Lucile. Madame Benoît, kinder than she had ever been before, answered his look: “You are seeking for Lucile? She is dining at a friend's; but it is getting late, you will surely see her before an hour is past. At last, you are here! Embrace me, my son-in-law! I forgive you.”

“In truth! my charming mother you rob me of the first word that I wished to say to you. Your wrongs are blotted out by this kiss!”

“If I have been in the wrong, you had excused me beforehand by your extraordinary mania, of which I see you are at last cured! Wishing to live amongst wolves at your age! Admit that it was blindness, and thank the one who enlightened you! Are you not better off here than anywhere else? and can one live as befits a human being, away from Paris?”

“Excuse me, madame, but I have not come to Paris to live here.”

“And what have you come for then? to die here?”

“I shall not remain long enough to die of home-sickness. I have come to Paris, first of all, to fetch my wife; and also to pay an indispensable visit.”

“You intend to take my daughter back to Arlange?”

“As soon as practicable.”

“And she will accompany you to that hole?”

“I think it is her duty to.”

“Will you force her to do so according to law, and will your love be attended by two policemen?”

“No, madame; I would give up my rights if I had to

claim them in court ; but we have not come to that : Lucile will follow me through love."

"Through love for you, or for Arlange?"

"For both, for the forge and its master."

"You are sure of it?"

"Without boasting, yes."

"Well ! we will see. And may one know what is the indispensable visit that shares with my daughter the honour of bringing you to Paris?"

"Do not make any mistake ; it is a visit in which you cannot accompany me."

"To what privileged mortal?"

"The Minister of the Interior."

"The Minister? What for? Do you mean it? And if it became known?"

"It will soon be known. It is necessary for the welfare of the forge that I should occupy a seat in the Conseil General. There is a vacancy, and I am going to ask the Minister to accept me as government candidate."

"But, foolish fellow, you will cause the whole of the Extreme Right to quarrel with me."

"It is not usual to quarrel with people one does not know. If you had questioned me with reference to my political opinions I would have told you that I have no sympathy with the opposition. Besides, it seems to me that we great landowners have nothing to complain of : everything is done to please us."

"You said that well. 'We great landowners!' In truth one would think that you had been one all your life!"

"What next, madame ! but we have been so from father to son, for nine hundred years ! Do you know many more ancient landowners?"

"If we play on words we may talk long without understanding one another. Listen. It pleases you to solicit for

country honours, well and good. However the forge has gone well for fifteen years, although I never had a seat in the Conseil General. You wish to present yourself as ministerial candidate; I think you would have done better had you asked for our friends' votes, they are numerous, rich and influential. However, I will pass over all that. See how forbearing I am! I have just gained a victory over you; I have forced you to come to Paris, on my ground—"

"In my house."

"It is true. Oh! you were born a proprietor, you have soon taken root! In spite of all, you have come here because I forced you to do so, it is a defeat; but I do not mean to take advantage of it. Will you sign a peace?"

"With both hands!—if you are reasonable."

"I will be so. You love Arlange, you long to get back there, and you will not live there without your wife, which is quite natural. I will give you back Lucile so that you may take her home to the forge."

"That is all I ask for; let us sign!"

"Wait a minute! On my part I love Paris as you do the forge, and the Faubourg as you love Lucile. If I do not penetrate into the aristocratic world just once, I shall be a dead woman. Would it cost you much, whilst you are here at hand, to introduce your wife and myself into the homes of eight or ten of your friends, to show us a small corner of that earthly paradise from which I have always been excluded by—"

"By the original sin? It would cost me a great deal and would be of no use to you. I will not repeat that I have an old grudge against the Faubourg, which absolutely forbids my ever again setting foot therein. You think you have sufficient right over me to claim the forgetfulness of my repugnance, and the sacrifice of my pride. But can you insist on my risking all Lucile's future happiness solely to gratify

you? I have in store for her, away from Paris, a modest happiness, without glitter, without noise, and of a smiling uniformity. We have, if God grants us life, thirty or forty years to live together in a narrow but charming sphere, without other pleasures than those we shall receive from each other, without other events than the births and marriages of our children. Such an happiness is all she desires, she has told me so. Who is to assure me that the sight of a world where all is show and vanity will not turn her head? that her eyes, dazzled by the brightness of lustres and chandeliers, will be able to accustom themselves to the subdued light of the lamp that must illuminate all our evenings? that her ears, deafened by the turmoil of society, will always be able to hear the voices of our woods and my own? At present she is still the same Lucile as formerly; she is tired to death of Paris—”

“What do you know about it?”

“I feel sure it is so; but I cannot say that at the end of six months she will think the same as now. There needs but a ball to change a young wife's heart, and ten minutes of a waltz can cause more mischief than an earthquake.”

“You think so? Well, so be it. Lucile is yours, govern her as you think right. But I! Listen attentively, this is my ultimatum; and if you refuse it, I break off all negotiations. What prevents your introducing me, I do not say to the whole Faubourg, but into five or six houses of your acquaintance?”

“Without my wife! Believe me, dear Madame Benoît, it would be just as wise to tie a stone round each of our necks, and throw ourselves into the river. All the aristocracy know you as they knew your father. They know of your persevering ambition; you are the talk of the whole Faubourg; the baron wrote me word to that effect, and what he says is always correct. They say that you have paid two or

three millions for the pleasure of entering the aristocratic world in a marchioness's wake. If I introduced you to-day, to-morrow every one would count the number of visits we had made, and they would reckon, to within a centime, the sum that each one brought me in. What do you think of that? If you are sufficiently childish to wish to play at such a game, I am not sufficiently philosophical to be your partner. To-morrow I leave for Arlange with my wife; I offer you, like a dutiful son-in-law, a seat in the carriage, and that is all that common sense allows me to do for you."

Madame Benoît felt greatly tempted to scratch out this model son-in-law's eyes, but she hid her vexation. "My friend," said she, "you have spent thirty hours in a post-chaise, you are tired, you feel sleepy, and I was badly inspired when I attempted to convert a man who had just arrived from a long journey. You will be more obliging when you have rested. Wait for me in this arm-chair, and allow me to go and see to your room. I will not be long!"

She went out smiling and rushed like a tempest to her daughter's room. I cannot say whether she opened the door or forced it, so violent was her entry. She roughly pushed Julie, who was unfolding a pillow case. "Stupid girl," exclaimed she, "what are you doing?"

"Only what you told me, madame."

"You are mad; you did not understand me. Leave that and remove all this luggage. Did one ever hear of such a thing? A man's boxes in my daughter's room!"

"I beg your pardon, madame, but—"

"There are no buts, and I will forgive you when you have obeyed. Take them all away? take them all away!"

"Where to, madame?"

"Wherever you like; into the street, into the court-yard! No, wait: into my room!"



"Madame gives up her room? But where shall I make madame's bed?"

"Here, on this sofa, in the marchioness's room. Why do you look so surprised? Is not a mother's place near her daughter?"

She left the maid to her astonishment, and went down stairs saying softly to herself: "The marquis has only come to defy me: he shall not be gratified. I will go into society in spite of him: Madame de Malésy will help me; we will teach this crazy blacksmith that we can do without him. But I must not let him seduce my daughter! He would take her back to Arlange, and then, farewell to the Faubourg!"

At the same moment a carriage drove up, and the marchioness, full of hope, jumped lightly out and entered the house. Madame Benoît was in the drawing-room before her; she feared nothing so much as the first meeting, and it was necessary for her to be present to prevent the expansion of those young hearts. Lucile expected to fall into her husband's arms, but it was her mother who received her: "There you are at last, dear little one!" said she with her usual fluency and more than ordinary tenderness. "How long you have been! I was beginning to feel anxious. My heart hangs but on a thread when I do not feel you near me. My darling, in this world there is but one disinterested affection: the love of a mother for her child. How have you spent the day? Do you feel better than during the last few days? See, Gaston, how she has altered! Your conduct has hurt her deeply. She needs more care; violent emotions are fatal to her; your presence alone makes her blush and turn pale at the same time. But you yourself, my dear marquis, do you know that I no longer recognise you? You pretend that the air of Arlange is good for you; one would not think so to see you. You are no longer like the brilliant Marquis

d'Outreville who was introduced to me but two months ago. But that reminds me, we must not forget how tired you are: poor fellow! a hundred leagues in a post-chaise, without a single rest! It is sufficient to thoroughly knock up one stronger than you. Fortunately a good night's rest will set all to rights. There is close by, in my room which I give up to you, an excellent bed awaiting you."

"But, madame—" timidly murmured Gaston.

"No objections or ceremonies with me if you please! To consider her children before herself, is a mother's pleasure. Besides, I shall sleep quite comfortably on a small bed, near my dear Lucile, whose health claims all my attention. We ought already to be in bed. Come, handsome sleeper, wish your wife good night, and come and kiss her hand: it seems to me that you do not give her much of a welcome!"

Neither Gaston nor Lucile were dupes of this speech, but they were the victims of it; impudence nearly always succeeds with young people, because they feel a sort of shame in giving any one the lie. In the present case, another kind of delicacy paralysed Gaston's and Lucile's courage. These pure hearts would have thought themselves wanting in modesty had they opposed Madame Benoît's will; even Gaston, despite all the vigorous resolutions that he had made, dared not avail himself of his rights, nor appeal to his wife's feelings: he was as timid as Lucile, perhaps more so. Whatever boldness may be attributed to our sex, it is not the less true that well-bred men are, when in love, more shy than young girls. The presence of a third person suffices to freeze their words on their lips, and to drive back to the bottom of their souls a passion that was overflowing.

Madame Benoît settled a plan of action which would never have succeeded but for the dominion she held over her daughter, and also Gaston's proud timidity. For a whole week, she managed to keep separated two beings who wor-

shipped each other, who belonged to one another, and who dined together every evening. The amount of turbulence she gave vent to, to distract her daughter, and of impudence she displayed to intimidate her son-in-law made an incalculable total. Every day she imagined a fresh pretext to drag Lucile about Paris, and to leave the marquis at home. She clung to her daughter, she only left her when Gaston was out. To see her zeal and perseverance, you would have imagined that she was one of those jealous mothers who cannot resign themselves to share their daughter with a husband.

Her first idea was simply to punish her son-in-law, and to let him suffer in his turn the vexations of an unhappy passion. The success of her scheme gave her back a little hope: she thought that Gaston would own himself defeated and would offer spontaneously to introduce her into society. But the marquis was bearing his widowhood patiently: he wrote to Lucile, and he received from her some notes written by stealth; he was planning with her a means of escape. Thanks to Madame Benoît's supervision, this husband and wife, united both by law and religion, were reduced to school-boy stratagems. Their love, without losing any of its confidence or serenity, had acquired the pungency of an illegitimate passion. The daily ceremony of kissing hands, authorised and presided over by the mother-in-law, concealed the delivery of that correspondence, that Madame Benoît never even suspected. Tired at last of uselessly awaiting her son-in-law's conversion, she fell back on her original plan, and turned towards Madame de Malésy. She had heard from her dressmaker that the Marchioness de Croix-Maugars was going to give a garden fête on the anniversary of her wedding-day. All the nobility then in Paris would assemble there, for balls are rare on the 22nd of June, and when one has an opportunity of dancing under a tent one does so. By

a lucky hazard Gaston had obtained the promise of an audience from the Minister for the 21st at eleven in the morning. The widow took advantage of her son-in-law's enforced absence to leave Lucile at home, and went off to see the old countess.

"Madame," said she on entering, "you owe me eight thousand francs, or thereabouts."

"What's that you say?" remarked the countess, who seldom heard with that air.

"I come neither to claim them, nor to reproach you for not paying me."

"Oh ! very well then."

"I attach so little importance to money, that not only do I relinquish that sum, but if needs be I would make other sacrifices to attain the end I have in view. I wish to be admitted into the society of the Faubourg with the marchioness, my daughter, and without loss of time. To-morrow Madame de Croix-Maugars gives her ball : you are her mother, she can refuse you nothing : would it be taking too great advantage of the right I have to your friendship, to ask you for two cards of invitation ?"

The countess's small, bright eyes grew as round as the brass nails on an arm-chair. She smiled at the widow's speech like a miner at the sight of gold. "Alas ! little one," said she tearfully, "you have quite a false idea of my influence. My daughter is my daughter, I do not deny it ; but she is in her husband's power. Do you know Croix-Maugars ?"

"If I knew him, I should not need—"

"That is true. Well, dear child, it is sufficient for me to ask him a favour to obtain a refusal. I am the most unhappy woman in Paris. My creditors are in league against me, although I have never done anything to them. My son-in-law is a man ; he ought to protect me, but he abandons me.

What did I ask him for the day before yesterday ? A little money to pay the Bon-Saint-Louis, which has greatly degenerated, since your poor father's time ! He replied that his fête would be magnificent, and that his purse was empty. I do not know which way to turn. How can you be so hard-hearted as to come and speak of balls and pleasures to a poor despondent woman like myself. All will end badly ; my furniture will be seized and sold." Here the countess held her tongue and let her tears speak. "Excuse me," resumed she, "you see that I am hardly in a fit state to receive visitors ; but I shall always be pleased to see you : you remind me of my good Lopinot. Ah ! if he were still of this world ! Come again some day soon, we will have another talk together, and if I am still good for anything, I will try and be of use to you."

At sight of the countess's tears, Madame Benoît resolutely pulled out her handkerchief. She thought : "As it is necessary to weep, let us do so. After all, tears do not cost me more than they do her !" The sensible widow added aloud : "A little courage, countess ! There is no reason to feel so disheartened. Do you then owe so much money to that horrid Saint-Louis ?"

"Alas, little one, fifteen hundred francs !"

"But that is a mere trifle !"

"Yes, it is a great shame ! to be called Countess de Malésy, to be mother of the Marchioness de Croix-Maugars, to hold the first rank in the Faubourg, to have the entry of all the drawing-rooms for one's-self and one's friends, and to be unable to pay a miserable sum of fifteen hundred francs. You pity me, do you not ? Good-bye, my child, farewell. My grief is double when I see you weep ; leave me alone with my worries !"

"Will you allow me to call at the Bon-Saint-Louis ? I will undertake to settle the matter."

"I forbid it!—or rather, yes; go there. Those people are your successors, you will get on better with them than I should. Besides they are of your caste; shop-keepers do not eat each other up. You are lucky, you get for a hundred francs what costs us a thousand. Go to the 'Bon-Saint-Louis.' I bet, little rogue, that you will purchase the debt without opening your purse; and that I shall owe you the fifteen hundred francs;"

"That is settled, countess; and as one good turn deserves another—"

"Yes, I will do you all the good turns in my power. But decidedly, I had rather that you did not settle matters with these shop-keepers. What should I gain? It would soon be known that they were paid, and I should have all the others after me. My poor child, I owe in all directions."

"How much?"

"Ah! how much! I know nothing about it myself. My memory is failing. But I have some accounts here. See: the pastry cook in the Rue de Poitiers claims five hundred francs for half a dozen fowls I ordered and a few wretched cakes that I have eaten at different times in his shop. How you all speculate upon us!"

"I will say two words to him."

"Yes, tell him that he ought to be ashamed of himself, and that he is not to send here again."

"You may count on me."

"Now here is Master Majou, who requests to be paid for a cask of ordinary claret."

"It is a trifle, give me that paper."

"A thousand francs."

"Dear me! your ordinary claret is not to be disdained."

"Now, this is a very honest man's account. I am sure that you will come to terms with him. It is the upholsterer who re-covered this furniture. He asks a thousand francs,

but knowing how to set to work you could obtain a receipt for almost nothing."

"I will try, countess." She took the four accounts and folded them carefully together. "It is now twelve o'clock," continued she, "I will go at once and set your affairs in order. But now that your mind is more easy, will you not try the effect of your eloquence on the Marquis de Croix-Maugars?"

"Yes, little one, I will. But my mind is not so easy as you think. I have not yet told you all my sorrows." She opened a drawer in her work-table and took out a letter-case crammed full of papers. "You are about to hear of a great many other sorrows!"

"Wait a moment!" thought Madame Benoît. "Four thousand francs can pass, although it is a high price for a simple passport into the Faubourg. But now the old lady has tasted my money, her appetite is increasing, and if I do not put an end to it she will ask me to buy her the Louvre and the Tuileries as I pass by." The widow laid down on the table the accounts she held in her hands, and said in a sad voice: "Alas! madame, I very much fear that you are right, and that your sorrows have no remedy!"

"No! no!" quickly replied the countess. "I am sure to set myself right some day. You have given me heart, and I feel much stronger. I shall be at my daughter's in an hour—the time necessary to change my dress. I shall have an invitation in the name of the Marchioness d'Outreville. You will not need two; you will go with your daughter: I want to avoid that name of Benoît which would spoil all. Whilst I am occupying myself about you, go to the tradesmen with the accounts, and end this little speculation which seems to have taken your fancy. Return here at three o'clock punctually and we will exchange our powers like two ambassadors."

M. de Croix-Maugars pulled a long face when he saw his mother-in-law enter. The countess was so needy that her

presence was dreaded like the arrival of a bill of exchange. But when the marquis found she did not ask for money, he could refuse her nothing. He smilingly handed her an enamelled card, the value of which he was far from suspecting; it was the fourth time in a year that he had paid her debts.

Madame Benoît, as light-hearted as a sailor who nears land, went to her notary's, then hurried to the creditors and paid their accounts without bargaining. The accommodating upholsterer, whom the countess had praised so much, was that ferocious Bouniol who had insisted on seeing her some few days before. At three o'clock Madame de Malésy pocketed the receipts, and the widow returned home with the precious invitation. She did not trust it to her pocket, she kept it in her hand, she gazed on it, she smiled at it. "At last," said she, "here is my certificate of naturalisation; I am now a citizen of the Faubourg. But I must not fall ill between now and to-morrow!" She then recollected that Lucile had been left alone ever since eleven o'clock, and that the marquis had had time to have a long talk with her. This thought, which would at any other time have exasperated her, seemed to leave her almost indifferent. Her happiness reconciled her with the whole world, including Gaston; when a man's drunk he knows no enemies.

On alighting from her carriage, she perceived a late victim of her passion, the truthful Jacquet. "Come here, my lad!" said she. "Draw near, do not fear anything; you are forgiven. Do you wish then to re-enter my service?"

"Oh! thank you very much, madame. The marquis has introduced me into another house."

"The marquis introduced you? You are lucky!"

"Yes, madame, I earn thirty francs a-month."

"I congratulate you. Is that all you had to tell me?"

"No, madame; I have brought two letters for you."

"Give them to me, then!"



"In a moment, madame ; I am looking for them under the lining of my hat. Here they are !"

One of these letters was from Gaston, the other from Lucile. Gaston wrote : " My charming mother,—In the hope that maternal love will draw you from that Paris which you love too much, I take your daughter to Arlange. May you soon join us there ! "

" Who gave you that ? " asked Madame Benoît of Jacquet. But Jacquet had flown off, like a bird before a storm. She quickly opened her daughter's letter and found three pages of excuses which ended with these words : " A wife should follow her husband."

I do not wish to speak ill of the human heart, but the widow, after reading these two letters, thought neither of her daughter's flight, nor of her son-in-law's treachery, nor of the loneliness in which she was left, nor of the rupture of all the ties that bound her to her family. She thought that she had just bought an invitation, that this invitation was in the name of d'Outreville, that it would be of no use to Madame Benoît, and that they would dance without her at the Croix-Maugars.

## VI.

THE Marquis d'Outreville, sure of his right and of Lucile's love, did not fear being pursued by his mother-in-law. Their flight was like a lover's tour. They travelled a little in the morning, a little in the evening ; they chose their own lodgings ; they stopped to look, like two connoisseurs in a studio, at all the fresh landscapes ; they got out of the carriage, they followed the footpaths, they wandered arm in arm into the woods ; they often lost themselves, but always found their way again. Lucile, as much a marchioness as a woman

can be, and treated as such by all the hotel-keepers on the road, took three weeks to go over the distance that with her mother she had covered in twenty-four hours : yet the second journey seemed to her shorter than the first. The arrival of the pair was made a holiday at Arlange : Lucile was worshipped by all their people. The old folks of the country round about and the elders of the forge came and told her in their brogue that they had found the time very long whilst she was away ; the companions of her childhood awkwardly presented themselves to wish her good day : she opened her arms to them. She returned with interest the large amount of love that these good people showed for her ; she inquired after the absent ones ; she asked for news of those who were ill ; she caused the joy that filled her heart to shine on the whole village.

. Having paid this tribute to the memories of her youth, she anticipated shutting herself up at home with Gaston, closing the door to all callers, and living on love in the depths of her quiet retreat. Children have the improvidence of those American savages who cut down the tree at its roots and eat all its fruit in one day. But the marquis, since his marriage, had seriously thought over and found out the great secret of domestic life : the economy of happiness. He knew that living alone together, that dream of all lovers, must rapidly exhaust the richest hearts, and that if they said all they had to say to each other in a day, they would soon be obliged to repeat what they had said or say nothing at all. If all newly married couples were not accustomed to squander their happiness, the honeymoon, which the universe accuses of being too short, would have more than four quarters. Gaston felt he had sufficient resources in his intelligence and sufficient tenderness in his heart to cause his happiness to last as long as his life, but on condition that he was careful of it. He accustomed Lucile, by degrees, to share her time between

love, work, and even weariness, that wholesome neighbour which adds so many charms to pleasure. He caused her to take interest in his studies and his researches ; he persuaded her to make and receive calls ; he had the heroism to take her to see the Baroness de Sommerfogel ! He united himself with her to ask M. and Madame Jordy to spend the first holidays they could take at Arlange with them ; he dictated to her four or five letters intended to appease Madame Benoît and to bring her back to them.

These marks of filial affection only exasperated the widow. She was not far from thinking herself insulted by the vain excuses which could not open the door of the most insignificant drawing-room for her. If she had been able to forget for a minute what she called her daughter's treachery, the Marquis de Croix-Maugars's invitation, which she always carried about her, would have reminded her of it. She became a misanthrope, like all feeble minds that think they have reason to complain of any one. She came to hate the entire world, and even her late idol the Faubourg-St.-Germain : it seemed to her that the whole Parisian aristocracy conspired against her, and that the Marquis d'Outreville was at the head of the plot. If she did not bid an eternal farewell to the scene of her disappointments, it was because she would not own herself defeated. She persisted in rubbing up against the nobility, but solely to defy it from close quarters ; she wished to trample the carpets of the Rue de Grenelle like Diogenes trampled under foot Plato's luxury ! She did not again see Madame de Malésy or any of her other debtors, excepting the Baron de Subresac. Not that she expected any service from him : she folded her arms and expected nothing more save from chance. But the baron showed her some good will, and it is something, for want of better, to possess a baron's friendship.

M. de Subresac was very old at seventy-five years of age :

when twenty, he had been remarkably young. He had squandered, without thinking, both his life and his fortune, and his past adventures were still a topic of conversation among the dowagers of the Faubourg. Unhappily for his old age he had forgotten to marry in good time, and he had condemned himself to solitude, that chill companion of old bachelors. Consigned to a fourth floor with a life annuity of six thousand francs, between a valet and a cook who merely served him through habit, he hated his home and lived mostly outside. Every day after lunch, he dressed himself with the minute coquetry of a woman who is getting old. It has been stated that he used rouge, but I am not sufficiently sure of that to affirm it. As soon as he was dressed he slowly made five or six calls, was well received everywhere, and invited to dinner seven times a week. He was loved for the care he took of himself and of others : for women of all ages he had the most exquisite attentions, which the young generation no longer knows. Independently of this merit, the fair sex recompensed him for thirty years of loyal servitude, like a sovereign gives an asylum to the soldier who has grown old in his service. I do not speak of five or six venerable grandmothers with whom he found that closer friendship which is like crystallized love. Thanks to the good feelings that he had sown on his way, he was as happy at seventy-five as one can be away from home.

He had no infirmities, but in the winter of 1845 his most intimate friends began to notice that his health was failing. His conversation was no longer so animated, and he was at times absent-minded. His speech was slower, and his tongue less free. At last a graver symptom showed itself, he could not resist sleep. One evening, after dinner, at the house of the Marquis de Croix-Maugars, he went to sleep in his chair. Madame de Malésy, one of his fancies of 1815, noticed it first, and thereupon quoted this ominous, saying : " Youth

that watches, old age that sleeps, are forewarnings of death." In April, 1846, the baron was seized with giddiness in front of the barracks of the Rue Bellechasse, and would have fallen on the pavement had it not been for a corporal of chasseurs who supported him in his arms. This circumstance caused him to greatly regret the want of a carriage, his friends were always pleased to receive his visits, but they did not send their carriages for him. Madame Benoît was the first who paid him such delicate attentions. Whether she was expecting him or he was leaving her, she never forgot to place her softest cushioned carriage with the easiest springs at his disposal. She showed herself more attentive than his oldest friends, and that is not surprising; for her he was a hope, for the others only a remembrance. The day when she expected nothing further from him, after Lucile had left her, she did not in the least diminish her attentions; on the contrary, she felt a bitter pleasure in loading with her hospitality the only nobleman who was her friend. She would say to herself, "The idiots! this is how I would have petted them all!"

Naturally, the baron had a real friendship for her who treated him so well. Old men are like children, they instinctively attach themselves to those who take care of their weakness. He let her profit from the leisure that the season left him; whilst more than half of the Faubourg retired to the country to rest from the pleasures of the winter, he took up his quarters in the Rue Saint-Dominique, and dined nearly every day with her. The meat was ordered for him, he was served with the dishes he liked best. He ate slowly, Madame Benoît followed his example, so as not to look as if she waited for him to finish. He loved old wine; she gave him the cream of her cellar. At dessert, she told him her complaints, and he listened to her. He came at last to seriously pity her imaginary wrongs. She wept, and, as

tears are contagious, he wept with her. Three months after Lucile's departure, he was part of the household. He had become accustomed to that easy, plenteous life, and to those tranquil pleasures which only cost him a little compassion.

One night, towards the end of September, he said to Madame Benoît: "I am no longer good for anything, my poor charmer; I resemble some old berlin wool work that shows the canvas and the design of which is three parts effaced; but such as I am, I can yet give you what you have longed for during your whole life, will you be a baroness? It is not a husband that I offer you, it is but a name. At your age, and as you are, you would deserve better; but I offer what I have. Something tells me that I shall not trouble you long, and that my old age will soon end; indeed, I think that we shall do well to hurry, if you wish to become Madame de Subresac. I have many connections in the Faubourg; I am loved a little everywhere, let me have but the time to introduce you to my friends. After my death, they will continue to receive you out of love to me. Then, if you wish, nothing will prevent your choosing a man of your own age, who will be your husband in reality, and not merely in name. Think over this proposal; take a week to reflect, take a fortnight, I shall last as long as that. Write to your children: perhaps the fear of this marriage will make them do what you wish. As for me, whatever happens, I shall die more peacefully if I have the consolation of having contributed to your happiness.

Madame Benoît was not in the least prepared for this offer; however, she did not waste two days in thinking over it. An hour after the baron's departure, her mind was made up. She said to herself: "I swore that I would not marry again; but previously I had sworn to enter the Faubourg. This time, at least, I shall be sure of not being beaten by my husband! I shall marry the baron, and I shall disinherit the marchioness of all I can possibly take from her. To work!"

She sent her answer to M. de Subresac, and on the morrow, without writing to her children, she hurried forward the preparations for her marriage. Never did a passionate lover run more eagerly to his wedding, the reason was that Madame Benoît married something more than a man, she married the Faubourg! A slight indisposition from which M. de Subresac suffered warned her that she had no time to lose; she showed more activity than at the time of her daughter's marriage. Whilst the baron was confined to his room, his betrothed hurried to the mairie, to the notary's office, and to the vestry. She also found time to visit her dear invalid and to question his doctor. The ceremony was fixed for the 15th of October. On the 14th, M. de Subresac, who was getting better, complained of a headache, the doctor talked of bleeding him, Madame Benoît made him keep quiet, the bleeding was postponed till the morrow, the headache went away, and the lovers dined together with a good appetite.

I do not know whether you remember the month of October, 1846: one would have thought one was still in the finest days of September, for the sun gave a warm denial to the calendar. The vintage was good all over France, and even in Lorraine. Whilst Madame Benoît pursued her barony, her daughter and her son-in-law were enjoying the autumn in the society of their friends. M. and Madame Jordy had left their business, to spend three weeks in Arlange. Madame Mélier kept them a week and allowed them to stay at the forge afterwards—neither mothers nor husbands refuse anything to a young wife who is in her fourth month of pregnancy. A fast friendship established itself between the refiner and the smith. They hunted together every day, whilst their wives worked at baby clothes worthy of a prince. Robert called the marchioness Lucile, and Gaston said Céline to Madame Jordy. On the very day that the marquis was to gain a father-in-law and lose forty or fifty thousand francs

income, the two couples, awakened at dawn of day, started off together in a solid wagonnette proof against all forest tracks. Great dew-drops sparkled on the grass; the yellow leaves fell turning round in the air and came and lay beneath the trees. The social robins followed the carriage from bough to bough; and the wagtails ran, wagging their tails, right under the horses' feet. From time to time a frightened hare, with ears thrown back, passed like lightning across the road. The sharp morning air gave a colour to the young women's cheeks. I know nothing so pleasant as those autumn chills, coming between the overpowering heat of summer, and the bitter cold of winter. Heat unnerves one, cold stiffens one; a soft breeze strengthens the muscles of the body and the mind, stimulates our activity and increases the happiness of living twofold.

After a long drive, which seemed long to no one, the four friends left the carriage. Lucile, who headed the expedition, led the way to a green space under a large spreading oak, near a little stream bordered with water cresses. Madame Jordy, lazy through duty, settled herself comfortably on the forest grass, finer and softer than the best furs, whilst her husband emptied the hampers that the wagonnette contained, and the marquis lighted a big fire for the breakfast, Lucile throwing into it armfuls of dead leaves and twigs. Then Robert carved the cold partridges, and the marchioness employed all her talent in making a magnificent omelette. Then the coffee was placed near the fire, at a respectable distance, and the marquis was warned not to let it boil. After that began one of those tournaments of appetite which would be ridiculous in town, but are delightful in the country; and when an acorn fell into a glass every one laughed immensely, and thought that the old oak was very clever.

It was not far from twelve o'clock when they gave the remains of the feast to the coachman and footman. The two



young wives followed a path that they knew of old, and walked quickly to the borders of the forest, where they suddenly introduced their husbands into the midst of a vintage scene, in Madame Mélier's vineyards. A mild sun lit up the red leaves of the vines. The sturdy plants buried in the earth their knotty roots like a vigorous child clings to its nurse's breast. The beautiful red earth, slightly softened by the autumn dews, clung to the feet of the grape-gatherers, each of whom carried a little acre of it on his shoes. Two carts loaded with great vats waited at the foot of the slope, and from time to time a vintager, bent by the weight of his load, came and emptied it therein. A little farther off two children of six years old watched with hungry eyes the preparation of the vintagers' meal. An enormous cauldron of cabbage soup emitted its succulent vapours as it boiled; the potatoes were cooking in the ashes, and the curdled milk awaited its turn in blue earthenware jars. The children's looks said with a certain eloquence: "Oh! fine hot potatoes, with nice cold curdled milk!"

The women, in short potticoats, sang at the tops of their voices a rural song. This noisy liveliness is beneficial to the owner of a vineyard: when one sings one cannot eat. Whilst Gaston and Robert climbed the slope and reviewed the line of battle bristling with vine stakes, a strange discussion was taking place between their two wives near the vintagers' kitchen.

"Are you mad?" Madame Jordy was saying, "this soup must be detestable."

"Only a plateful!" said the marchioness.

"But you have only just breakfasted!"

"I long for that soup."

"If you are hungry let us return to the carriage."

"No; it is soup that I want; ask for some for me, or I shall steal some. I die of longing!"

"What, tears? Oh! this is becoming serious. I thought

that longings were only allowed to me. But, to be sure, who knows? eat away, madame, eat away!"

The pretty marchioness devoured the share of a thrasher. Madame Jordy was surprised that any one could have such a ferocious appetite who was not eating for two. She took her friend aside and asked her a thousand questions, and spoke long with her. The conclusion she came to was that a doctor must be consulted.

"Do I interrupt you?" asked Gaston, who had returned with M. Jordy.

"Not at all," answered Madame Jordy, "we were talking chiffons."

"Ah!"

"Yes. You know we are making some baby's clothes?"

"Well?"

"Well, we have a great fear."

"What is it?"

"We are afraid that we must make a second set."

Gaston felt his legs giving way under him, though he was a strong man. He proposed returning to the carriage and going to the doctor's. "What happiness!" said Lucile. "If the doctor says 'yes' I will write to mamma to-morrow."

On that day Madame Benoît took her seat at ten A.M. in the celebrated coach which had just been completed, the coat of arms having been changed. Before mounting the flight of velvet stairs which served as steps, she looked complacently on the baron's coronet and the armorial bearings of the Subresacs. Contrary to custom it was the bride who went to fetch the bridegroom. She mounted gaily to the fourth floor, rang quickly, and found herself face to face with a couple of servants in tears: the baron had died suddenly during the night. The poor bride experienced the withering sorrow that Calypso felt when she heard of Ulysses' departure. She wished to see the body; she felt the cold

hands ; she sat at the bedside dejected, stupefied, unable to obtain relief in tears. On witnessing this despair the old valet, who knew the list of the baron's loves, said that no one had loved him like Madame Benoît.

It was Madame Benoît who paid the funeral expenses. She assured the future of his old servants, saying : " It belongs to me to pay his debts : am I not his widow in the eyes of the Almighty ? " She decided upon wearing mourning. She accompanied the corpse to the cemetery. The entire Faubourg was there. When she saw the file of carriages that followed hers, her tears at last found vent, and she slowly exclaimed : " How unhappy I am ! all those people would have come to dance at my house. "

When she returned home, crushed with grief, they handed her the following letter :—

" My dear Mamma,—This is the sixth letter that I have written without obtaining an answer ; but this time I am sure to be successful. I will not repeat that we love you, that we are sorry to have grieved you, that we miss you, that we begin to light fires in the evening, and that your empty arm-chair brings tears to our eyes : you have often resisted these appeals, and one must make use of stronger arguments to decide you. Listen then : if you will be good and return near us, I will give you as a reward—a grandson ! I do not attempt to describe our joy ; it is better that you should come to witness and share it. LUCILE D'OUTREVILLE."

" Yes," exclaimed Madame Benoît, " a grandson ! But if it should be a grand-daughter ?

She ran to the mantel-piece, and added, looking at herself in the glass : " I am forty-two ; in sixteen years my grand-daughter will come out ; her parents will never leave Arlange ; and who will take her to the Faubourg, if I do not ? Dear little one ! I love her already. I shall be fifty-eight, I shall still

be young, and between now and then I shall not be foolish enough to die like some old idiots. I start for Arlange!"

"Madame," interrupted Julie, "they have come from the 'Reine-Artémise' with mourning materials."

"Send the people away! Are they making fun of me? The baron was nothing to me, and I do not mean to show useless regrets."

"But, madame, it is you who said—"

"Mademoiselle Julie, it is your mistress who speaks to you, and you have no right to interpose your 'buts.' Because I have put up with your faults during fifteen years, you have perhaps thought I was engaged to you for a whole lifetime? It is like Master Peter, your faithful friend, who follows your good example and will have his own way. You attend to me badly; and what is far more serious, you have both been rude to Madame the Marchioness d'Outreville. Do not again say that it is I who said so-and-so. The truth is that my daughter cannot see either of you again, and as I return to Arlange—"

"I understand, madame; you punish us for having obeyed you."

It was thus that Madame Benoît dismissed her allies before signing the peace. Two days later her smile lit up Arlange. She did not allude to the past; she abstained from all recrimination; she truly reconciled herself with her daughter and her son-in-law: she almost owned her fault.

"My children," said she, "how well you continue here! Remain here always! Gaston was right in singing the praises of the country: it is there that one enjoys the best health and brings up fine children. Give me many grandchildren; I shall never complain of having too many. It is I who will portion off your daughters: therefore, my Lucile, act accordingly. But you can understand my infatuation for Paris? It is an abominable city; I only found mortifica-

tions there, and I will not return excepting to take my grandchildren into the world !”

Seven months later the marchioness was confined of two boys. One was Madame Jordy's godson, Madame Benoît would not be godmother to the other. “I wait for the girls,” said she.

During the ten years that have passed Lucile has presented seven children to her husband, and so happy a fecundity does not seem to have tired her. She has grown rounder without losing any of her beauty: are cherry trees any the less beautiful because they bear cherries every year? Gaston, true to the two passions of his youth, gives the best part of his time to Lucile, and the remainder to science. His foundry progressed as satisfactorily as his family. He has vigorously pushed forward metallurgic industry, and has hastened the lowering of the price of iron. Thanks to him the ton of rails has fallen from 360 francs to 285, and he does not despair of reducing it to 200, as he promised his friend the engineer. The Marquis d'Outreville is, besides a handsome blacksmith—you would not take him for more than thirty: years take so slight a hold on the happy man!

But Madame Benoît is a little old woman, thin, frowning, grumbling, unbearable to others and to herself. It is because she has vainly awaited the little fair head on which her last hopes rested. The marquis's seven children are seven chubby boys, who roll from morning to night in the dust, who wear holes in the elbows of their jackets and at the knees of their trousers, who have chilblains in winter and red hands in all seasons, and who will have to go by themselves into the Faubourg St.-Germain if they are curious to see their grandmother's paradise.

Gabrielle-Auguste-Eliane will die like Moses on Mount Nebo, without ever having set foot in the promised land.

# UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

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## CHAPTER I.

I AM certain you have passed Doctor Auvray's house twenty times never imagining for a moment that miracles are performed there. It is a modest-looking house, without any sign, and does not even bear the unattractive inscription, "Maison de santé" on its door. It is situated near the end of the Avenue Montaigne, between Prince Soltikoff's gothic palace and the great Triat's gymnasium where they regenerate mankind on the trapèze. A gate, painted in imitation of bronze, opens upon a little garden of lilacs and roses. The porter's lodge is on the right; the pavilion on the left contains the doctor's rooms and those of his wife and daughter. The principal building is at the further end, and turns its back upon the avenue, and opens all its windows on to a little park, well planted with chestnuts and lindens. There the doctor cares for, and often cures, people who have lost their reason. I would not take you into his establishment, if you ran any risk of meeting all kinds of insanity; but do not be afraid, you will not have the distressing spectacle of imbecility, paralytic insanity, or even utter loss of intelligence. M. Auvray has created for himself what is called a specialty; he treats monomania. He is an excellent man, full of intelligence and learning. If you should ever meet him, with his bald head, well-shaven chin, black vestments, and placid face, you would not know whether he was a doctor, a professor, or a priest. Considering how his eyes protrude, they are not ugly, they throw around comprehensive and serene glances, which reveal a world of kindly thoughts.

M. Auvray's vocation was decided when he was at the

medical school. He gave himself up passionately to the study of monomania—that curious disturbance of the faculties which is seldom due to a physical cause, which does not answer to any perceptible lesion in the nervous system, and which is cured by moral treatment. He was seconded in his observations by a young female superintendent of one of the wards, who was pretty and well educated. He fell in love with her, and, as soon as he obtained his degree, married her. It was a modest entrance upon life. Nevertheless, he possessed a little property which he applied to founding the establishment that you know. With a touch of charlatanism he could have made a fortune; whereas, he was satisfied if he covered his expenses. He avoided notoriety, and whenever he achieved a marvellous cure, he did not proclaim it from the housetops. His reputation made itself, and almost in spite of him. Modesty is certainly good in itself, but it ought not to be carried to extremes. Mademoiselle Auvray has not more than twenty thousand francs of dowry, and she will be twenty-two years old in April.

About a fortnight ago a cab stopped before M. Auvray's gate. The driver rang, and the gate was opened. The vehicle proceeded to the doctor's house, and two men briskly entered his waiting-room. The servant begged them to seat themselves till the doctor had finished his rounds. It was then ten o'clock in the morning.

One of the strangers was a man of fifty, large, brown, full-blooded, fresh-coloured, passably ugly, and specially ill-made; his ears were pierced, his hands large, and his thumbs enormous. Fancy a workman dressed in his employer's clothes: such is M. Morlot. His nephew, François Thomas, is a young man of twenty-three, difficult to describe, because he is like everybody else. He is neither large nor small, handsome nor ugly, developed like a Hercules nor spindled like a dandy, but, maintaining the happy medium throughout, unobtrusive from head to foot, hair, mind, and clothes all of the same quiet tone. When he entered M. Auvray's house,

he seemed much agitated; walked up and down apparently in a rage, would not keep still anywhere, looked at twenty things at once, and would have handled them all if his hands had not been tied.

"Calm yourself," said his uncle; "what I'm doing is for your good. You'll be happy here, and the doctor will cure you."

"I'm not ill. Why have you bound me?"

"Because you would have thrown me out of the carriage. You're not in your right mind, my poor François: M. Auvray will restore you."

"I reason as clearly as you do, uncle, and I don't know what you're talking about. My mind is clear, my judgment sound, and my memory excellent. Would you like me to repeat some verses? Shall I translate some Latin? Here's a Tacitus in this bookcase. If you would prefer a different experiment, I can solve a problem in arithmetic or geometry. You don't care for me to do so? Very well! Listen to what we have done this morning:

"You came in at eight o'clock, not to wake me, for I wasn't asleep, but to get me out of bed. I dressed myself without Germain's help; you asked me to go with you to Dr. Auvray's; I refused; you insisted; I got angry; Germain helped you to tie my hands; I'll discharge him to-night. I owe him thirteen days' wages: that is thirteen francs, as I engaged him at thirty francs a month. You owe him damages: you are the cause of his losing his New Year's gift. Is this reasoning? And do you still think you can make me out crazy? Ah! my dear uncle, take a better view of things! Remember that my mother was your sister! What would she say—my poor mother—if she were to see me here. I bear you no ill will, and everything can be arranged pleasantly. You have a daughter, Mademoiselle Claire Morlot—"

"Ah! there I have you! You can see clearly enough that you are off your head. I have a daughter? I? But I'm a bachelor. A confirmed bachelor!"



"You have a daughter," replied François, mechanically.

"My poor nephew! Let us see. Listen to me carefully. Have you a cousin?"

"A cousin? No. I have no cousin. Oh! you won't find me out of my reckoning; I have no cousins of either sex."

"I am your uncle; isn't that so?"

"Yes, you are my uncle, although you forgot it this morning."

"If I had a daughter she would be your cousin; now you have no cousin, therefore, I have no daughter."

"You're right. I had the happiness of seeing her this summer at Ems with her mother. I love her; I have reason to think that I am not indifferent to her, and I have the honour to ask you for her hand."

"Whose hand?"

"Mademoiselle's hand—your daughter's."

"Well, so be it," thought M. Morlot, "M. Auvray will be very skilful if he cures him. I will pay six thousand francs board from my nephew's income. Six from thirty, leaves twenty-four. I shall be rich. Poor François!" He seated himself and casually opened a book. "Sit down there," he said to the young man; "I'll read you something. Try to listen; it will calm you down." He read:

"Monomania is the persistence of one idea, the exclusive domination of a single passion. Its seat is in the heart; there it must be sought and there it must be cured. Its cause is love, fear, vanity, ambition, remorse. It displays itself by the same symptoms as passion generally; sometimes by joy, gaiety, daring, and noise; sometimes by timidity, sadness, and silence."

During the reading, François seemed to grow quiet and drop asleep. "Bravo!" thought M. Morlot. "Here's a miracle performed by medicine already; it puts a man to sleep who has been neither hungry nor drowsy." François was not asleep, but he feigned sleep to perfection. He nodded at proper intervals, and regulated his heavy mono-

tonous breathing with mathematical accuracy. Uncle Morlot was taken in: he continued reading in a subdued voice, then yawned, then stopped reading, then let his book slip down, then shut his eyes, and went sound asleep, much to the satisfaction of his nephew, who watched him maliciously out of the corner of his eye.

François began by moving his chair: M. Morlot budged no more than a tree. François walked about the room, making his shoes creak on the inlaid floor: M. Morlot replied by snoring. Then the crazy young man went to the writing table, found an eraser, pushed it into a corner, fixed it firmly by the handle and cut the cord which bound his wrists. He freed himself, recovered the use of his hands, repressed a cry of joy, and stealthily approached his uncle. In two minutes M. Morlot was firmly bound, but with so much delicacy that his sleep was not even troubled.

François admired his work, and picked up the book which had slipped to the ground. It was the last edition of Doctor Auvray's Treatise upon Monomania. He took it into a corner, and set to reading like a bookworm, while awaiting the doctor's arrival.

## CHAPTER II.

It now becomes necessary for me to recount the antecedents of François and his uncle. François was the son of a toy dealer in the Passage du Saumon, named M. Thomas. Toy-selling is a good business, a hundred per cent. is cleared on almost every article. Since his father's death, François had enjoyed a competence of the degree, called honourable, because it obviates the necessity of doing dishonourable things; perhaps, too, because it makes possible the doing of the honours to one's friends. He had an income of thirty thousand francs.

His tastes were extremely simple, as I think I have told

you. He had an innate preference for things which are not glaring, and naturally selected his gloves, vests, and coats from the series of modest colours ranging between black and brown. He never carried an opera-glass, because, he said, his eyes were good ; nor wore a scarf-pin, because his scarf would keep in place without a pin ; but the real reason was that he was afraid of attracting attention. The very polish of his boots dazzled him. He would have been doomed to wretchedness if the accident of birth had afflicted him with a noticeable name. Had his sponsors called him Americ or Ferdinand, he would never have signed it in his life. Happily, his names were as unobtrusive as if he had chosen them himself.

His timidity prevented him from entering upon any career. After crossing the threshold of his baccalaureate, he hesitated before that great gate which leads to everything, and stood rapt in contemplation before the seven or eight roads lying before him. The bar seemed to him too boisterous, medicine too devoid of rest, a tutorship too pretentious, commerce too complicated, the civil-service too constraining. As to the army, it was useless to think of that : not that he was afraid to fight, but he trembled at the idea of wearing a uniform. He remained, then, in his original way of life, not because it was the easiest, but because it was the most obscure : he lived on his income.

As he had not earned his money himself, he lent it freely. In return for so rare a virtue, heaven furnished him with plenty of friends. He loved them all sincerely, and acceded to their wishes with very good grace. When he met any of them on the boulevard, he was always the one to be taken by the arm, turned about, and taken where his friends desired. Don't think that he was either foolish, shallow, or ignorant. He knew three or four modern languages, Latin, Greek, and everything else usually learned at college : he had some ideas of commerce, manufactures, agriculture, and literature, and he estimated a new book accurately enough, if there was nobody near to listen to his opinion.

But it was among women that his weakness showed itself in its full strength. It was a necessity of his nature always to be in love with somebody, and if in rubbing his eyes in the morning he saw no gleam of love on the horizon, he rose out of sorts and infallibly put his stockings on wrong side out. Whenever he was at a concert or a play, he began by searching among the audience for some face that pleased him, and was in love with it the whole evening. If he found one to suit him, the play was fine, the concert delicious; otherwise, everybody played badly or sang false. His heart so abhorred a vacuum, that in presence of a mediocre beauty it spurred him to believe her perfect. You will realise without my help, that this universal susceptibility was by no means licentiousness, but rather innocence. He loved all women without telling them so, for he had never dared to speak to one. He was the most candid and inoffensive of rakes; Don Juan, if you please, but before Donna Julia.

When he was in love, he rehearsed to himself courageous declarations, which regularly died upon his lips. He paid his court, laid open the very bottom of his soul, held long conversations and charming dialogues, in which he arranged both the questions and replies. He made appeals energetic enough to soften rocks, and warm enough to melt ice; but no woman was drawn towards him by his mute aspirations: one must will it, to be loved. The difference is great between desire and determination: desire floats carefully among the clouds, determination runs on foot among the stones. One leaves everything to chance, the other expects nothing but from itself, determination goes straight to its point over hedges and ditches, ravines and mountains, while desire remains motionless and cries in its sweetest voice:

“Steeple, steeple, come or I shall die!”

Nevertheless, in the August of this very year, four months before pinioning his uncle's arms, François had dared to love face to face. At Ems, he had met a young girl almost as

shy as himself, whose timidity had given him courage. She was a Parisienne, frail and delicate as fruit grown on the shady side of the wall, transparent as those lovely children whose blue blood can be seen distinctly under their skin. She accompanied her mother whom an inveterate disorder obliged to take the waters. Mother and daughter must have lived apart from the world, for they regarded the boisterous crowd of visitors with looks of astonishment. François was casually presented to them by one of his friends, who had become cured and was going to Italy through Germany. He attended them assiduously for a month, and was virtually their only companion. The young Parisienne and her mother went straight to François' heart as naturally as from one room to the next, and found it pleasant there. Every day they discovered new treasures, and wandered with fresh delights over this mysterious and virgin land. They never asked themselves if he were rich or poor; they were satisfied to know that he was good; and nothing they might find could be more precious to them than that heart of gold.

On his side, François was inspired with his metamorphosis. Has any one ever told you how spring breaks upon the gardens in Russia? Yesterday the snow covered everything, to-day comes a ray of sunshine which puts winter to flight. At noon the trees burst their buds, by night they are covered with leaves, to-morrow they almost bear fruit. So did François' love bloom and bear its freight of promise. His coldness and constraint were carried away like icicles in a thaw: the shamefaced and pusillanimous boy, in a few weeks became a man. I do not know who first uttered the word "marriage," but what difference does it make? The word is always understood when two true hearts speak of love.

François was of age and his own master, but his beloved depended upon a father whose consent it was necessary to obtain. There the unfortunate youth's timidity mastered him again. It was well enough for Claire to say to him: "Write unhesitatingly, my father has been already apprized:

you will receive his consent by return of post." He wrote and re-wrote the letter a hundred times, without being able to make up his mind to send it. Nevertheless, it was an easy task, and the most ordinary intelligence would have performed it with credit. François knew the name, position, fortune, and even the temperament of his future father-in-law. They had let him into all the domestic secrets; he was almost one of the family. What was left for him to do? To state, in a few words, what he was and what he possessed, the reply was not doubtful. He hesitated so long, that at the end of a month Claire and her mother were forced to entertain misgivings regarding him. I think they would have still been patient for a fortnight longer, but the paternal wisdom did not permit it. If Claire was in love, if her lover had not decided to make a formal declaration of his intentions, the proper thing was to get the girl in a safe place in Paris without loss of time. Possibly then M. François Thomas would make up his mind to ask her in marriage, he knew where to find her.

One day when François went to take the ladies out for a walk, the hotel-keeper told him that they had left for Paris. Their rooms were already occupied by an English family. Such a rude blow falling suddenly upon such a feeble organization impaired his reason. He went out like an idiot and began searching for Claire in all the places where he had been accustomed to take her. He returned to his lodgings with a violent pain in his head, which he treated heaven only knows how. He had himself bled, took boiling-hot baths, applied ferocious sinapisms, and in short revenged on his body the tortures of his mind. When he considered himself cured, he started for France, resolved to apply for Claire's hand before changing his coat. He hurried to Paris, sprang from the train, forgot his luggage, jumped into a cab, and cried to the driver:

"To *Her*! Gallop!"

"Where to, your honour?"

"To Monsieur—, Rue—, I don't know any more." He had forgotten both the name and address of the woman he loved.

"Drive to my house; I'll find it again." he gave the coachman his card and was driven home.

His concierge was a childless old man named Emmanuel. On meeting him, François bowed low and said: "Sir, you have a daughter, Mademoiselle Claire Emmanuel. I wanted to write to you to ask for her hand, but I thought it preferable to make the request in person."

They realized that he was crazy, and ran to the Faubourg St. Antoine to find his uncle Morlot. Uncle Morlot was the most honest man in the Rue de Charonne, which is one of the longest streets in Paris. He made antique furniture with ordinary skill and extraordinary conscientiousness. It was not his habit to represent stained pear-wood as ebony, or a cabinet of his own make as a mediæval example! Nevertheless, he knew as well as anybody the art of cracking new wood and making it appear full of wormholes of which worms were entirely innocent. But his principle was to wrong nobody. With a moderation almost absurd in the manufacture of articles of luxury, he limited his profits to five per cent. over and above the general expenses of his establishment: consequently he had gained more respect than money. When he made out a bill, he went over the addition three times, so fearful was he of misleading somebody to his own advantage.

After thirty years of this business, he was just about as rich as when he left his apprenticeship. He had made his living like the humblest of his workmen, and he asked himself, with a touch of jealousy, how M. Thomas had managed to lay up money. His brother-in-law looked down on him a little, with the vanity characteristic of parvenus, but he looked down upon his brother-in-law more effectually, with the pride of a man who never cared to become a parvenu. He made a parade of his mediocrity, and said with plebeian

self-conceit, "At least I'm sure that I've nothing that belongs to anybody else."

Man is a strange animal, I am not the first who has said so. This excellent M. Morlot, whose hyper-scrupulous honesty amused the whole faubourg, felt an agreeable tickling at the bottom of his heart, when they came to tell him of his nephew's disorder. He heard an insinuating little voice saying to him, very low, "If François is insane, you'll be his guardian." Probity hastened to reply: "We won't be any richer."—"How's that?" answered the voice: "An insane man's board never costs thirty thousand francs a year. Moreover, we shall have all the trouble; we'll have to neglect our own business; we deserve compensation; we won't wrong anybody."—"But," replied disinterestedness, "one ought to help one's relations without charging them for it."—"Certainly," murmured the voice, "Then why didn't our family ever do anything for us?"—"Bah!" responded the goodness of his heart, "This won't amount to anything, anyway; it's only a false alarm. François will be well in a couple of days."—"Perhaps, however," continued the obstinate voice, "the malady will kill the patient, and we'll inherit without wronging anybody. Who knows but that a blow on a cracked head may make a fortune?"

The good man stopped his ears, but his ears were so large, so ample, so nobly expanded, like a conch-shell, that the subtle and persevering little voice always slipped into them in spite of him. The establishment in the Rue de Charonne was left in charge of the foreman, and the uncle established his winter-quarters in his nephew's pretty rooms. He slept in a good bed, and liked it. He sat at an excellent table, and the cramps in the stomach which he had complained of for many years, were cured by magic. He was waited upon, dressed, and shaved by Germain, and got accustomed to it. Little by little he consoled himself for the sight of his crack-brained nephew. He fell into the habit of thinking that perhaps François never would get well;



nevertheless, he repeated to himself now and then, to keep his conscience easy, "I'm not injuring anybody."

At the end of three months, he grew tired of having a crazy man in the house, for he began to feel as if he were at home there himself. François' perpetual drivelling, and his mania for asking Claire in marriage, became an intolerable burden to the old man : so he resolved to shut the sick man up at M. Auvray's. "After all," he said to himself, "my nephew will be better cared for there, and I shall be more at ease. Science has recognised that it is well to give the insane change of scene to divert them : I'm doing my duty."

With such thoughts as these he went to sleep, when François took it into his head to tie his hands—what an awakening !

### CHAPTER III.

THE doctor entered offering apologies for having kept them waiting. François rose, placed his hat on the table, and explained matters with great volubility, while striding up and down the room.

"Doctor," said he, "this is my maternal uncle, whom I am about to confide to your care. You see in him a man of from forty-five to fifty, hardened to manual labour and the privations of a life of hard work ; as to the rest, born of healthy parents, in a family where no case of mental aberration has ever been known. You will not, then, have to contend against an hereditary disorder. His trouble is one of the most curious monomanias which you ever had occasion to examine. He passes with inconceivable rapidity from extreme gaiety to extreme depression ; it is a singular compound of monomania proper and melancholy."

"He has not entirely lost his reason ?"

"No, he's not absolutely demented ; he's unsound on one point only, so he comes entirely within your specialty."

“What’s the characteristic of his malady?”

“Alas, doctor, the characteristic of our times—cupidity. My uncle, after working from childhood, finds himself poor, while my father, starting from the same point as he did, left me considerable property. My uncle began by being jealous, then realizing that he was my only relation, and would be my heir in case of death, or my guardian in case of insanity, as a weak mind easily believes what it desires, the unhappy man persuaded himself that I had lost my reason. He has told everybody so, and will say the same to you. In the carriage, although his own hands were bound, he thought that it was he who was bringing me to you.”

“When was the first attack?”

“About three months ago. He went down and said to my concierge, with a frightened air: ‘Monsieur Emmanuel, you have a daughter; leave her in your lodge, and come and help me bind my nephew.’”

“Does he realise his condition? Does he know that he is not himself?”

“No, doctor, and I think that’s a good sign. I’ll tell you, moreover, that he has some remarkable derangements of the vital functions, and especially of nutrition. He has entirely lost appetite, and is subject to long periods of sleeplessness.”

“So much the better. A deranged person who sleeps and eats regularly is almost incurable. Let me wake him up.”

M. Auvray gently shook the shoulder of the sleeper, who sprang to his feet. His first movement was to rub his eyes. When he found his hands bound, he realised what had happened while he slept, and burst out laughing. “That’s a good joke!” he said.

François drew the doctor aside.

“You see! Well, in five minutes he will be raving.”

“Leave him to me. I know how to take them.” He approached his patient smiling as one does a child whom

one wishes to amuse. "My friend," he said, "you woke up at the right time. Did you have pleasant dreams?"

"I? I've not been dreaming. I laughed at seeing myself tied up like a bundle of sticks. People would take me for the crazy one."

"There!" said François.

"Have the kindness to let me loose, doctor. I can explain matters better when I'm free."

"My friend, I'm going to untie you, but you must promise to behave yourself."

"Why, doctor, do you really take me for a madman?"

"No, my friend, but you're not well. We'll take care of you and cure you. Hold still. Now your hands are free. Don't abuse your liberty."

"Why, what the deuce do you suppose I'll do? I've brought you my nephew—"

"Very well," said M. Auvray, "we'll talk about that in good time. I found you asleep; do you often sleep in the daytime?"

"Never! This stupid book—"

"Oh! oh!" said the author, "the case is serious. And so you think your nephew is mad?"

"Mad enough to be tied up, doctor; and the proof is, that I had fastened his hands together with this rope."

"But you're the one whose hands were tied. Don't you remember that I set you free?"

"It was I—it was he—But let me explain the whole affair."

"Tut, my friend, you're getting excited: you're very red in the face. I don't want you to tire yourself. Be content to answer my questions. You say that your nephew is ill?"

"Crazy, crazy, crazy!"

"And you are satisfied to see him crazy?"

"I?"

"Answer me frankly. "You're not anxious for him to get well: isn't that so?"

"Why?"

"So that his fortune can remain in your hands. You want to be rich yourself. You don't like having worked so long without making a fortune. You think it should be your turn now?"

M. Morlot did not answer. He kept his eyes fixed on the floor. He asked himself if he were not having a bad dream, and tried to make out what was real in this experience of pinioned hands, cross-examinations, and questions from a stranger who read his conscience like an open book.

"Does he hear voices?" asked M. Auvray.

The poor uncle felt his hair stand on end. He remembered that persistent little voice which kept whispering in his ear, and he answered mechanically: "Sometimes."

"Ah! he has hallucinations?"

"No, no! I'm not ill; let me go. I'll lose my senses here. Ask all my friends: they'll tell you that I'm in full possession of my faculties. Feel my pulse: you'll see that I've no fever."

"Poor uncle!" said François. "He doesn't know that insanity is madness without fever."

"Ah!" added the doctor, "if we could only give our patients fever, we'd cure them all."

M. Morlot threw himself on the sofa; his nephew continued to pace the doctor's study. "I am deeply afflicted," said he, "by my uncle's misfortune, but it is a great consolation to be able to entrust him to such a man as yourself. I have read your admirable book on Monomania, and I know, moreover, that you are a father to your patients, so I will not insult you by recommending M. Morlot to your special care. As to the expense of his treatment, I leave that entirely to you." He took a thousand-franc note from his pocket book, and quietly laid it on the mantel shelf. "I shall have the honour to call again in the course of next week. At what hour is access to the patients allowed?"

"From noon till two o'clock. As for me, I'm always at home. Good-day, sir."

"Stop him!" cried the poor uncle. "Don't let him go! He's the crazy one; I'll explain his madness!"

"Pray calm yourself, my dear uncle," said François going out; "I leave you in M. Auvray's hands; he'll take great care of you."

M. Morlot tried to follow his nephew. The doctor held him back. "What awful luck!" cried the poor uncle. "He won't say a single crazy thing! If he would only lose his bearings a little, you'd see well enough that it's not I who am crazy."

François already had hold of the door-knob. He turned on his heel; as if he had forgotten something: marched straight up to the doctor, and said to him: "Doctor, my uncle's illness is not the only motive which brought me here."

"Ah! ah!" murmured M. Morlot, who thought he saw a ray of hope.

The young man continued: "You have a daughter."

"At last!" cried the poor uncle. "You'll bear witness that he said, 'You have a daughter!'"

The doctor replied to François: "Yes, sir, please explain—"

"You have a daughter, Mademoiselle Claire Auvray."

"There it is! There it is! I told you that very thing!"

"Yes, sir," said the doctor.

"Three months since, she was at Ems with her mother."

"Bravo! bravo!" yelled M. Morlot.

"Quite correct," responded the doctor.

M. Morlot ran up to M. Auvray and said: "You're not the doctor! You're one of the patients!"

"My friend," replied the doctor, "if you don't behave yourself, we shall have to give you a shower-bath."

M. Morlot recoiled, frightened. His nephew continued: "Sir, I love Mademoiselle—your daughter. I have some hope that I'm loved in return, and, if her sentiments have not changed since September, I have the honour to ask you for her hand."

The doctor answered: "It is with Monsieur François Thomas, then, that I've the honour of speaking?"

"The same, sir, and I ought to have commenced by informing you of my name."

"Sir, permit me to tell you, that you've decidedly taken your own time." At this moment, the doctor's attention was drawn to M. Morlot, who was rubbing his hands with a sort of passion. "What's the matter with you, my friend?" he inquired in his sweet and paternal voice.

"Nothing! Nothing! I'm only rubbing my hands."

"But why?"

"There's something there that bothers me."

"Show it to me; I don't see anything."

"You don't see it? There, there, between the fingers. I see it plainly, I do!"

"What do you see?"

"My nephew's money. Take it away, doctor! I'm an honest man; I don't want anybody's property."

While the doctor was listening attentively to these first aberrations of M. Morlot a strange revolution took place in the appearance of François. He grew pale and cold, his teeth chattered violently. M. Auvray turned towards him, to ask what has happened.

"Nothing," he replied. "She's coming; I hear her; this is joy—but it overcomes me. Happiness falls upon me like the snow. The winter will be hard for lovers. Doctor, see what's going on in my head."

M. Morlot ran to him crying: "Enough! Don't be crazy any more! I no longer want you to be an idiot. People will say that I stole your wits. I'm honest, doctor; look at my hands; search my pockets; send to my house, Rue de Charonne, in the Faubourg St. Antoine; open all the drawers; you'll see that I've nothing that belongs to anybody else."

The doctor stood much perplexed between his two patients, when a door opened, and Claire came in to tell her father that breakfast was waiting.

François jumped up as if propelled by a spring, but his wishes only reached Mademoiselle Auvray. His body fell heavily on the sofa. He could scarcely murmur a few words. "Claire! It is I. I love you. Will you—?"

He passed his hand over his brow. His pale face flushed violently. The temples throbbed fiercely, and he felt a heavy oppression over his eyelids. Claire, as near dead as alive, caught up his two hands. His skin was dry, and his pulse so slight that the poor girl was terrified. It was not thus that she had hoped to see her lover again. In a few minutes a yellowish tinge spread about his nostrils; then came nausea, and M. Auvray recognized all the symptoms of a bilious fever. "What a misfortune," he said, "that this fever didn't come to the relief of his uncle; it would have cured him!"

He pulled the bell. The maid-servant ran in, and then Madame Auvray, whom François scarcely recognized, so much was he overcome. The sick man had to be put to bed, and that without delay. Claire offered her chamber and her bed. It was a pretty little couch with white curtains; a tiny chamber and chastely attractive, upholstered in pink, and blooming with great bunches of heather, in azure vases. On the mantle-piece was a large onyx cup. This was the only present which Claire had received from her lover. If you are ever taken with fever, dear reader, I wish you just such a sick-room.

While the first cares were being given to François, his uncle, beside himself, bustled about the chamber, getting in the doctor's way, embracing the patient, seizing Madame Auvray's hand, and crying in ear-splitting tones: "Cure him quick, quick! I don't want him to die; I won't permit his death; I've a right to oppose it; I'm his uncle and his guardian! If you don't cure him, they'll say I killed him. I want you all to bear witness, that I don't claim to be his heir. I'll give all his property to the poor. A glass of water, please, to wash my hands with."

They had to remove him to the sick-ward of the establishment. There he raved so, that it was necessary to put a strait-waistcoat on him, and place him in charge of the nurses.

Madame Auvray and her daughter took devoted care of François, although the treatment was not the most agreeable; the more delicate sex, however, takes naturally to heroism. You may say that the two ladies saw in their patient a son-in-law and a husband. But I think that if he had been a stranger, he would have had the same attention. St. Vincent de Paul invented merely a uniform, for in every woman, of any rank or age, exists the essential material of a sister of charity.

Seated night and day in this chamber, filled with fever, mother and daughter employed their moments of repose in dwelling upon their souvenirs and their hopes. They could not explain François' long silence, his sudden return, or the circumstances that had led him to the Avenue Montaigne. If he loved Claire, why had he waited three months? Did he need his uncle to be ill to bring him to M. Auvray's? If his love had died out, why did he not take his uncle to some other doctor? There are enough of them in Paris. Possibly he had thought his passion cured until Claire's presence had undeceived him! But no, for before seeing her, he had asked for her in marriage.

All these questions were answered by François in his delirium. Claire, hanging on his lips, eagerly took in his slightest words; she talked them over with her mother and the doctor, who was not long in arriving at the truth. To a man accustomed to disentangle the most confused ideas, and to read the minds of the insane like a partly obliterated page, the wanderings of fever are an intelligible language, and the most confused delirium is not without its lights. They soon knew that François had lost his reason, and under what circumstances, and they even divined how he had been the innocent cause of his uncle's malady.



Then commenced a new series of misgivings for Mademoiselle Auvray. François had been insane. Would the terrible crisis which she had unwittingly brought on cure him? The doctor assured her that fever had the privilege of indicating the exact nature of the mental disturbance, that is to say, of curing it. Nevertheless, there is no rule without exceptions, especially in medicine. Suppose François were to get well, would there be no fear of a relapse? Would M. Auvray give his daughter to one of his patients?

"As for me," said Claire, sadly smiling, "I'm not afraid of anything: I would risk it. I'm the cause of his sufferings; ought not I to console him? After all, his insanity is restricted to asking for my hand: he'll have no more occasion to ask it when I'm his wife; then we'll not have anything to fear. The poor fellow is ill only through excess of love; cure him dear father, but not too thoroughly. I want him always to be mad enough to love me as I love him."

"We'll see," responded M. Auvray. "Wait till the fever is past. If he's ashamed of having been ill, if I find him sad or melancholy when he gets well, I can't answer for anything. If, on the other hand, he looks back upon his disorder without shame or regret, if he speaks of it resignedly, if he meets the people who have been taking care of him without repugnance, I can laugh at the idea of relapses."

"Ah, father, why should he be ashamed of having loved to excess. It is a noble and generous madness which never enters petty souls. And how can he feel repugnance on meeting those who have nursed him? For they are we!"

After six days of delirium, an abundant perspiration carried off the fever, and the patient entered the state of convalescence. When he found himself in a strange room, between Madame and Mademoiselle Auvray, his first idea was that he was still at the hotel of the Quatre Saisons, in the principal street of Ems. His feebleness, his emaciation, and the presence of the doctor, led him to other thoughts; he retained his memory but vaguely. The doctor came to

his aid. He opened the truth to him cautiously, as they measure out food for a person enfeebled by fasting. François commenced by listening to his own story as to a romance in which he had not played any part; he was an entirely new man, and he came out of the fever as out of a tomb. Little by little the gaps in his memory closed up. His brain seemed full of empty places, which filled up one by one without any sudden jars. Very soon he was quite master of himself, and fully conscious of the past. The cure was a work of science, but, above all, of patience. It is in such particulars that the paternal treatment of M. Auvray is so much admired. That excellent man had a genius for gentleness. On the 25th of December, François, seated on the side of his bed, and ballasted with some chicken soup and the yolk of an egg, recounted without any interruption, trouble or wandering, without any feeling of shame or regret, and without any other emotion than a tranquil joy, the occurrences of the three months which had just passed.

Claire and Madame Auvray wept while they listened. The doctor acted as if he were taking notes or writing from dictation, but something else than ink fell upon the paper. When the tale was told, the convalescent added, by way of conclusion: "To-day, the 25th of December, at three o'clock in the afternoon, I said to my excellent doctor, to my beloved father, M. Auvray, whose street and number I shall never forget again, 'Sir, you have a daughter, Mademoiselle Claire Auvray; I saw her last summer at Ems with her mother; I love her; she has given me abundant proof that she loves me, and, if you are not afraid that I shall fall ill again, I have the honour to ask you for her hand.'"

The doctor only made a little motion of the head, but Claire passed her arm around the convalescent's neck and kissed him on the forehead. I wish for no other reply when I make a similar demand.

The same day, M. Morlot, calmer and freed from the strait-waistcoat, arose at eight in the morning. On getting out of

bed, he took his slippers, turned them over and over, shook them carefully, and passed them to the attendant, begging him to see if they did not contain thirty thousand francs. Not until they had been examined would he consent to put them on. He combed himself for a good quarter of an hour, repeating, "I don't want anybody to say that my nephew's fortune has got into my head." He shook each of his garments out of the window, after examining it down to its smallest crease. As soon as he was dressed, he asked for a pencil, and wrote on the walls of his chamber: "COVET NOT THAT WHICH IS ANOTHER'S." Then he commenced to rub his hands with incredible energy, to satisfy himself that François' fortune was not sticking to them. He scraped his fingers with his pencil, counting them from one up to ten, for fear that he should forget one.

The doctor paid him his customary daily visit, and the patient, imagining he was in a police-court, earnestly demanded to be searched. M. Auvray got him to recognize him, and told him that François was cured. The poor man asked if the money had been found. "As my nephew is going to leave here," he said, "he'll need his money; where is it? I haven't got it, unless it's in my bed." And before any one had time to prevent him, he turned his bed topsy-turvy. The doctor went out after pressing his hand. He rubbed this hand with scrupulous care. They brought him his breakfast; he commenced by examining his napkin, his glass, his knife, his plate, repeating that he did not want to eat up his nephew's fortune. The repast over, he washed his hands in enormous quantities of water. "The fork is silver," said he, "perhaps there's some silver sticking to my hands!"

M. Auvray does not despair of curing him, but it will take time. Summer and autumn are the seasons when doctors are most successful with insanity.

# GORGEON

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## CHAPTER I.

As Gorgeon had obtained the second prize for tragedy at the Conservatoire, he did not have long to wait before making his first appearance at the Odéon theatre. It took place, if I remember rightly, in January, 1846. He played Orsmane on St. Charlemagne's day, and was hissed by all the students. None of his friends were surprised however; it is so difficult to succeed in tragedy when one is named Gorgeon! He should have taken another name and have called himself Montreuil or Thabor; but he wouldn't, for he valued the name of Gorgeon, which was all he had inherited from his parents. His failure caused but little commotion; he did not fall from any great height. He was twenty, had few friends, and no supporters on the press. Poor Gorgeon! Yet he had made a great hit in the fifth act, and had roared like a lion as he stabbed Zaire.

No manager would engage him for tragedy; but an old play-writer who knew him procured him an engagement at the Palais-Royal theatre. He took a philosophic view of his lot. "After all," thought he, "vaudeville has a greater future than tragedy, for no one will ever write tragedies as beautiful as Racine's, and all tends to make me think that some one will compose better verses than M. Clairville's." It was soon acknowledged that he did not lack talent; his grimaces were most successful; his gestures were comic, and his voice was pleasing. Not only did he understand his parts, but he put some originality into them. The public took a fancy to him, and Gorgeon's name circulated pleasantly

on men's lips. It was constantly stated that Gorgeon had made a place for himself between Sainville and Alcide Tousez ; and that he judiciously blended ingenuity with nonsense.

This transformation of Orosmane into Jocrisse took about eighteen months. At two and twenty Gorgeon earned ten thousand francs a year, without counting extras and benefits. One does not get promoted so speedily in diplomacy. When he found himself at the pinnacle of glory and salary, he lost a little of his judgment ; we do not know what we should have done in his place. The surprise of seeing handsome furniture in his room and money in his purse affected his reason. He led the life of a gay young man and learnt to play lansquenet, which, unfortunately, is not at all difficult. I think that no one would be ruined through play if all games were as complicated as chess. The poor fellow persuaded himself, on examining his cash-box, that he was a scion of good family. When he left the theatre on the third of each month, with his salary in his pocket, he would say to himself : " I have a jolly old father, a hard-working and virtuous Gorgeon, who has earned a few crowns for me on the stage of the Palais Royal ; now all I have to do is to set them rolling ! " The crowns rolled so well that the year 1849 found him surrounded by a small court of creditors ; he owed twenty thousand francs, and was rather surprised at it. " How is it," he asked, " that when I earned nothing I owed nothing ? The more I earn, the more I owe. Does the receipt of a large salary bring a man into debt ? "

His creditors came to see him every day, and he sincerely regretted inconveniencing so many people. It is not true that actors enjoy being in debt as much as fishes do being in water. They feel as much as all other men the irksomeness of having to avoid certain streets, of trembling when there is a ring at the bell, and of reading hieroglyphics on stamped paper. Gorgeon regretted more than once the time of his first appearance on the stage, that time, that happy time when both grocer and milkwoman refused all credit to

Orosmane. One day, whilst sorrowfully meditating on the troubles which accrue from riches, he exclaimed : "Happy is he who has but a competency. If I earned only exactly what would suffice for my wants, I should not commit any extravagances : consequently I should have no debts, and I could circulate freely everywhere. Unfortunately I earn more than I need ; it is this super-abundance that ruins me. I require merely 500 francs a month ; all the rest is superfluous. Had I aged parents to support, sisters to portion, brothers to educate, I could afford to do so, and could still find the means of paying my debts. But I am the only one of my race and have no family cares. I ought to marry." He married, by way of economy, the greatest flirt of his theatre and of Paris.

I am certain that you have not forgotten that little Pauline Rivière, whose wit and beauty served as a parachute to seven or eight vaudevilles. She talked a little too quickly, but it was a pleasure to hear her chatter. Her little eyes, for they were very small, seemed at times to overspread her face. She never opened her mouth without showing two rows of teeth as sharp as those of a young wolf. Her shoulders were like those of a plump baby of four, rosy and dimpled. Her black hair was so long that, to enable her to display it, she was given the part of a Swiss girl to play. As to her hands, they were a curiosity, and Jouvin invented a special size in gloves for them, five and a half.

At seventeen, without other dowry than her beauty, and without other ancestors than the head clapper of her theatre, this pretty baby was very near becoming a marchioness. A descendant of the knights of the Round Table, a marquis and a Breton, had sought to marry her. He was very determined, and without the intervention of the dowagers of Huelgoat and Sarraven, he would have done so. But the anger of dowagers, as Solomon says, is terrible ; especially when they belong to Brittany. Pauline remained Pauline as before ; her marquisate was washed

away, and she did not grieve sufficiently to go after it. She continued to carry on four or five flirtations of different grades on the high road to matrimony. It was then that Gorgeon became one of her admirers. She received him as she received all her suitors, serious or volatile, with graceful impartiality. He was tall and well-made, and did not resemble a piece of old china. His eyes were not swollen, neither was his voice hoarse, nor his chin blue. His bearing was dignified, and almost stern. He wore kid gloves, and dressed like a member of the *Comédie Française*.

He courted her. From the first day, Pauline thought him nice. At the end of a month she thought him very nice : that was in February, 1849. In March, she thought him nicer than any of the others ; in April, she began to love him, and did not hide the fact from him. He expected to see all his rivals dismissed, but Pauline did not hurry herself. The preparations for the wedding were made in the midst of a cumbersome crowd of admirers, who somewhat irritated Gorgeon. He was uncomfortable both at home and at Pauline's : at her house he met his rivals ; at home he found his creditors. He flatly asked her one day if her other admirers would not soon go and sigh elsewhere.

"Are you jealous?" asked she.

"Not in the least."

"Be quiet then ; you have the evil eye. Why should you be jealous ? You know that I love you. Jealousy is always slightly ridiculous ; but in our profession it is absurd. Once you begin it, you will have to be jealous of the managers, authors, critics, and the audience. The audience courts me every night ! What's that to you ? I love you, I tell you so, I prove it to you in marrying you ; if that does not satisfy you, then you must be difficult to please."

The marriage took place at the end of April. The public paid Gorgeon's debts and the bride's outfit, in two benefit performances. The first was given at the *Odéon* theatre ; the second, at the Italian opera. All the Paris theatres took

part in them : Gorgeon and Pauline were liked everywhere. They were married at Saint-Roch, gave an excellent breakfast at Pestel's, and left for Fontainebleau in the evening. The first quarter of their honeymoon lit up the lofty trees of the old forest. Gorgeon was as happy as the son of a king. Around him spring caused the buds on the trees to burst forth. All became green excepting the oak trees that are always backward, as though their grandeur bound them to the shore. The grass and the moss spread themselves in soft carpets beneath the lovers' feet. Pauline filled her pockets with large bunches of white violets. They went out at dawn and returned at night. In the morning they started the lizards ; at night the buzzing cockchafers flew around their heads. On the first of May they went to the fête of Sablons, which lasts from eve till morn under the large beech trees. All the youth of the neighbourhood was there ; the young girls of Moret, the vine-dressers of Sablons and Veneux, and the beauties of Thomery, peasant-girls with white hands, whose work consists in inspecting the vines, and thinning the bunches of grapes. All these young people admired Pauline ; they thought her the wife of some neighbouring lord. She danced heartily till three o'clock in the morning, though she felt some sand in her shoes. Then, leaning on her husband's arm, she regained the carriage that awaited them.

They looked back more than once towards the fête that appeared in the distance like a large red spot. The sound of the fiddles, the noise of the toy whistles, the grinding of the rattles, and the reports of the crackers, reached them confusedly. Then they journeyed on in delightful silence, broken by the nightingale's song. Gorgeon felt moved, and let fall two tears, and Pauline began to sob and laugh. "How they would laugh," said she, "if they saw us weeping thus ! It seems to me that we are two hundred miles from the theatre."

"Unfortunately, we return thither in three days."

"Never mind ! life should not be spent in weeping. We shall not love one another the less for loving cheerfully."



Gorgeon was not jealous. When he re-appeared at the Palais-Royal he was not offended at hearing the old actors speak familiarly to his wife as they used formerly to do. She was almost their adopted daughter. They had seen her behind the scenes when she was a child, and she remembered riding on their knees. What annoyed him, was seeing Pauline's old admirers seated in the stalls and armed with their opera glasses. He became absent-minded, and once or twice his memory failed him ; it was noticed by his companions, who chaffed him accordingly. One maintained that he was going in for third parts. In theatrical parlance, the third parts are the villains, the jealous husbands, and all other bad-tempered people. A sorry jester asked him if he did not think of returning to the Odéon. He bore the jokes well enough ; but he did not relish the young men with the opera glasses. "Fortunately," thought he, "these gentlemen will not come behind the scenes nor to my house." Each time that he went up to his dressing-room by the dirty little staircase of the Rue Montpensier, he read with a certain amount of satisfaction the notice of the prefect of police forbidding all strangers to go behind the scenes. By way of prudence he accompanied Pauline each time that she played without him, and he brought her to the theatre each time that he played without her. Pauline was quite satisfied. She was a flirt, and she willingly cast her smiles amongst the audience ; but she loved her husband.

The summer passed smoothly by ; the stalls were half empty ; the fine fellows who annoyed Gorgeon so much, had emigrated to Baden, Cauterets, or Vichy ; M. de Gaudry, the Breton marquis who had wished to marry Pauline, spent the fine weather on his estate. The young couple lived in perfect quietude, and the honeymoon did not set. But in December, all Paris had returned, and the Society of Dramatic Artists announced everywhere a grand ball for the 1st of February. Gorgeon was steward and his wife patroness. All the men who interested themselves in the

Paris theatres from near or far hastened to call on the patronesses and purchase tickets; the beautiful sellers rivalled one another in zeal, and it was a case of who should sell the most. Gorgeon saw plainly that it would be impossible to keep his door shut. There was a continual stream of visitors on his staircase, and the yellow kid gloves wore out his bell-rope. What was to be done? He spent all his spare time indoors, but he was rehearsing in two plays, and was occupied from twelve to four. He rarely came home without meeting some swell who was coming down his stairs humming a tune out of one of his vaudevilles. When he found anybody with his wife, he was obliged to be agreeable: every one was exquisitely polite to him. M. de Gaudry bought a ticket and soon came back for another for his brother. Then he lost his own and came back for a third; then he wanted a fourth for a young gentleman belonging to his club; and so on until he had bought twelve tickets. Gorgeon was Bertrand's best pupil; he was a capital hand with a pistol, and could score fifteen bull's eyes out of twenty shots; but what was the use of that? M. de Gaudry had never been impolite to him, quite the reverse. He congratulated him, he flattered him, he praised him to the skies; he would say to him: "My dear Gorgeon, you are an admirable buffoon. There is no one who can equal you in amusing people. Only yesterday you made me laugh so much that I had tears in my eyes. How funny you are, my dear Gorgeon!" If the poor fellow had lost his temper, not only would the world have thought him wrong, but it would also have said that he was going mad.

Pauline loved him as much as ever, but she was very glad to see a little of the world and to have compliments paid her. The love of a few well born and well educated men did not worry her, she played with the fire after the manner of a woman who is sure not to burn herself. She kept a record of the conquests she made; she carefully remembered the foolish things that were said to her, and she laughed at

them with her husband, who did not laugh much. When Gorgeon flatly suggested closing the door to all admirers, she put him off. "I will not make you appear ridiculous," she said. "Fear nothing; if any one of these gentlemen forgot himself, I would very soon put him back in his place. You can trust your honour to me. If we were to do as you suggest, all Paris would hear of it, and you would be pointed at in the streets. But not if I know it!" He was indiscreet enough to allude to this question before his theatrical companions. Gorgeon was teased, and was nick-named Gorgeon the tiger. He gave in, he refrained from making any remarks on the subject, and was remarkably pleasant to those he disliked the most. His friends changed their tactics, and called him Gorgeon-Dandin. Nobody dared to banter him to his face, but that horrid name Dandin fluttered about in the air around him. When going on to the stage he would hear it issue from behind some scenery. He would look round and see no one; the speaker had disappeared. Should he wish to look elsewhere it would be impossible, unless he missed his cue.

These jokes soured Gorgeon's temper, and the harmony of his household was disturbed. He quarrelled with his wife. Pauline, strong in her innocence, was a match for him. She said: "I will not be tyrannised over." Gorgeon answered: "I will not be made ridiculous." Their mutual friends said the husband was in the wrong. "As he is so distrustful why did he choose an actress for his wife. He would have done better to marry a shopkeeper's daughter; no one would have gone to his house after her."

In the midst of these quarrels the anniversary of their wedding-day came round without either of them noticing it. Each of them recollected it the following day. Gorgeon said to himself: "She must love me very little as she let it go by." Pauline thought that her husband most likely regretted having married her. M. de Gaudry, who was never far off, sent her a bracelet. Gorgeon wished to go and return

it with thanks of his own ; Pauline pretended she intended keeping it : “ Because you did not think of making me a present,” said she, “ it pleases you to find fault with the slightest attention my friends show me ! ”

“ Your friends are knaves whom I will correct.”

“ You will do better to correct yourself. Till now I used to think that there were two classes of men above all others—noblemen and actors. I know now what to think of actors.”

“ You may think what you like of them,” said Gorgeon, taking his hat, “ but I will no longer be the subject of your comparisons.”

“ You are going ? ”

“ Farewell.”

“ Where are you going ? ”

“ You shall know.”

“ You will return.”

“ Never.”

## CHAPTER II.

PAULINE remained four months without news of her husband. He was sought for everywhere, even in the river. The public mourned for him ; his parts were given to others. His wife wept for him sincerely, she had never ceased loving him. She received no one, returned with horror the marquis's bracelet, and repelled all the consolations her gentlemen friends offered her. She hated her coquetry, and cried, whilst tearing her beautiful hair : “ I have killed my poor Gorgeon ! ” Towards the end of September, a rumour spread to the effect that Gorgeon was not dead, and that he was the delight of Russia. “ Can he be living ? ” thought the disconsolate Pauline. “ If he has made me weep without cause, he shall pay for my tears.” And she attempted to laugh ; but sorrow had the upper hand, and all ended in an increase of weeping.

A week later, an anonymous friend, who was no other than M. de Gaudry, sent her the following article, taken from the *Journal de Saint-Petersbourg*: "On the 6th of September, in the presence of the court and a brilliant audience, the rival of Sainville and of Alcide Tousez, the celebrated Gorgeon made his first appearance at the Michael theatre, in *Le Sœur de Jocrisse*. His success was complete, and the young deserter from the Palais-Royal theatre found himself overwhelmed with applause, bouquets, oranges, and presents of all kinds. With one or two more such acquisitions, our theatre, which is already so well off, will not have its equal in Europe. Gorgeon's salary is at the rate of four thousand silver roubles (16,000 francs) and a benefit yearly. His forfeit, which is insignificant, will be paid out of the fund of the Imperial theatres."

Pauline wept no more, the pretty widow entered the category of forsaken wives. All Paris united in pitying her and blaming her husband. "After being married only a year, to think of his abandoning a charming wife with whom he had never had occasion to find fault! Leaving her to her own devices, and she only eighteen years old! And all without the least reason, without a pretext, for a mere freak. What excuse could he give? Jealousy? Why, Pauline was a model-wife; and she had not lost a single feather of her white wings." To add another touch to the picture they did not fail to say that Gorgeon had left his wife destitute: as though she did not receive five hundred francs a month from the Palais-Royal! Her husband had left her all the money he had and some handsome furniture, part of which she sold when she went to live on the fourth storey of a house in the *Rue de la Fontaine-Molière*. She inspired a great amount of sympathy in all the men, and especially in M. de Gaudry and his neighbours in the stalls. But she would not allow any good soul in patent leather boots to come and sympathise with her at home. She lived alone with a cousin of her own age who filled the functions of cook and maid.

Her father was neither a help nor a comfort to her, for he drank. In her retirement, she tired herself out forming useless plans and contradictory resolutions. One moment she wished to sell all she possessed, start for St. Petersburg and throw herself into her husband's arms ; another, she thought it more just and more conjugal to go and scratch his eyes out. Then she altered her mind ; she wished to remain in Paris, give an example of all the virtues, edify the world by her widowhood, and deserve the name of the Penelope of the Palais-Royal.

Her imagination suggested many other silly actions, but she did not adopt them. Gorgeon, soon after his first appearance at the Michael theatre, wrote her a loving letter. His anger had cooled, he no longer had his rivals under his eyes, he saw things clearly ; he forgave, he craved forgiveness, he asked his wife to join him : he had obtained an engagement for her. Unfortunately, these words of peace arrived at a time when Pauline, surrounded by three dear lady friends, was adding fuel to the hate she bore her husband. She went in for drama, and burnt the letter without reading it. Gorgeon, who reckoned on an answer, felt hurt and did not write again.

In November, Pauline's resentment, kept up by her friends, was yet at its height. One morning, towards eleven, she was dressing, in front of her looking-glass, to proceed to a rehearsal. Her cousin had gone to market leaving the key in the door. The young woman was removing the last curl-paper from her hair, when she turned round uttering a cry of fright. She had seen reflected in the glass a little man, exceedingly ugly, wrapped up in a cloak of fox fur. "Who are you ? what do you want ? go out ! you should not come in thus—Marie !" she exclaimed so precipitately that her words were scarcely intelligible.

"I do not love you, you do not please me," answered the little man, perceptibly embarrassed.

"Do I love you ? Leave the room !"

"I do not love you madame ; you do not—"

"Insolent man ! Leave the room or I will call for the police ! I will throw myself out of the window !"

The little man clasped his hands piteously and said in an imploring voice : "Forgive me ; I did not mean to offend you. I have travelled seven hundred miles to propose something to you ; I have just arrived from St. Petersburg ; I only know very little French ; I had prepared what I wished to say to you, and you have frightened me so—" He sat down, and wiped his forehead with a cambric handkerchief.

Pauline hastened to throw a shawl over her shoulders. "Madame," resumed the old gentleman, "I do not love—forgive me, and do not be angry. Your husband has played me a most infamous trick. I am Prince Vasilikof ; I am a millionaire ; but I only belong to the fourteenth grade of nobility, because I have never served in the army."

"All this is nothing to me."

"I know it, but I had prepared what I wished to say to you, and—I continue. You see, madame, that I am neither very handsome nor in my first youth. Besides that, I have contracted, in my old age, certain nervous habits, for which everybody ridicules me. All this did not prevent my falling in love with a charming person of very good family, and asking her in marriage. Her parents had accepted me on account of my fortune, and Vava was on the point of giving her consent, when your husband had the infernal idea—"

"To marry her ?"

"No, but to caricature me on the stage and to amuse the whole town at my cost. My marriage has fallen through. After the first representation, I was dismissed ; after the second, Vava engaged herself to a Finland colonel who does not even possess an income of a hundred thousand francs a year.

"Well ?"

"Well I have determined that I will avenge myself on Gorgeon, and, if you will assist me, your fortune is made. I do not love you, though you are very pretty, and no woman

can please me save Vava. The proposals I have to make to you are perfectly honourable, and I beg you will not be astonished by their extraordinary nature. Will you start for St. Petersburg in an excellent post-chaise? You will find, on the Place du Palais-Michel, a hundred yards from the theatre, a magnificent mansion that belongs to me, and that I beg you to accept. The servants of the house are moujiks of mine, who will obey you blindly. The butler and the steward are French; you are at liberty to take a lady's maid and a companion with you; you will have two carriages at your disposal. At the theatre I have engaged for you a box on the first tier. I shall provide for all the expenses of your household; my steward will give you every month whatever sum you may require; and finally, on the eve of the day that you leave Paris, I will deposit with your banker as large a capital as you like to name. I do not speak of such a trifle as fifty or sixty thousand francs, but of a fortune of two or three hundred thousand. You will only have to speak."

Pauline had had time to get over her surprise. She folded her arms, and looking her strange visitor in the face, said:—"My dear sir, for whom do you take me?"

"For a good woman shamefully deserted, and who has a thousand reasons to avenge herself on her husband."

"There is some truth in what you say; but if I avengo myself on Gorgeon, I will do so in a proper way and will not have an accomplice."

"Madame, allow me to tell you again, at the risk of displeasing you, that I do not love you; on the other hand I respect you greatly, and believe you a very virtuous woman. Again: I esteem your husband's character, although he has treated me cruelly. If I thought he was indifferent to his honour I would seek other means of avenging myself. This is what I ask of you in return for fortune. Do not alarm yourself too soon. You will owe me neither love, nor friendship, nor thanks, nor even courtesy. I will engage on my honour never to enter your house. We will never go out



together ; you will be at liberty to do whatever you like ; you will receive whomsoever you like, without excepting your husband. All I ask—" Pauline listened attentively. "All I ask is a seat by your side, in your box, during eight performances. Gorgéon has made the court laugh at my expense : I wish to have the laughers on my side."

The young woman knew her husband's proud temper sufficiently to understand that such a vengeance would be cruel. She thought of the fearful consequences that might ensue. "You are mad," she said to the prince. "Have you not other means of punishing my husband ? Would it be difficult for you to send him to Siberia for two or three months ?"

"Extremely difficult. Your countrymen have strong prejudices against Siberia. Besides, in spite of my title and my wealth, I am no one ; for, as I said, I have never served."

"I understand." She reflected for a few minutes, then resumed : "In two words this is the bargain you offer me : a fortune for my reputation ?"

"Not at all ; I have no interest in causing you to lose your reputation. You will have the right to publish at any time you like the conditions of our agreement. On my part I promise to vindicate you to the best of my ability ; all I care for is to produce an effect for the moment. Once the end attained, you will again enjoy your good reputation. You see it is simply a question of your acting a part.

The discussion continued until Marie's return. Pauline asked for time to reflect, and the matter was postponed for a week. During the interval the young wife's friends unanimously advised her to avail herself of the prince's offer. Some rejoiced to see her go, others entertained hopes of seeing her compromised. They pointed out her husband's unpardonable behaviour, the sweetness of revenge, the singularity of such a novel part, and the profits she would derive from it. She listened with an inattentive ear, and as if thinking of other things. Let who will explain the peculiarities of the feminine heart ! What will you think

BUT I tell you that she accepted these absurd proposals, and that she consented to undertake this unlucky journey because she longed to see her husband? Her disinterestedness is proved by her refusing the three hundred thousand francs Prince Vasilikof offered her. Entreaties had to be employed to make her accept the magnificent dresses that were, so to say, the costumes of her part. She left on the 1st of December, in a post-chaise, with her cousin Marie. She arrived on the 15th in a magnificent sledge emblazoned with the prince's coat of arms. All the town talked of her: Vasilikof had arrived two days previously, and no one ignored the news, neither the Russians, nor the French, nor Gorgeon. Pauline already repented her foolish freak. Public eagerness and curiosity set her thinking. Every man she saw in the street reminded her of her husband: all men are alike when dressed in fur cloaks.

The prince allowed her a fortnight to recover from the fatigues of the journey; then she had another week's respite as Gorgeon was not acting. She looked at the play bills as the condemned, during the Reign of Terror, read the executioner's lists. She did not enjoy her dresses, nor her house, nor all the luxury by which she was surrounded. Her drawing-room was cited as one of the wonders of St. Petersburg. The walls were of white Paros marble, and the furniture was covered with old red Beauvais tapestry. The windows had no other curtains than six large red camellias trained as espaliers. In the centre of the room, under an enormous chandelier of rock crystal, was a circular lounge shaded by a weeping camellia, a true miracle of horticulture. Pauline scarcely noticed it. Her cook, an illustrious Provençal whom Vasilikof had lured away from the palace of a German prince bishop, vainly exhausted his skill. Pauline was no longer hungry. Yet she used to possess a good appetite when she supped with her husband at Douix's or at Bignon's. On the 6th of January (new style), the play bill, which was brought to her, informed her that Gorgeon would perform

that night in *Le Dîner de Madelon*. She felt as though like ; had received a stab in the heart. She wanted to write to the prince and ask him to excuse her. Her cousin thought it would be better for her to write to her husband. She sent a loving and beseeching letter to Gorgeon, and in it she told him faithfully all that had taken place. "I do not know what to do," she said ; "I am alone, without support or advice. On the day we were married you promised to help and protect me ; come to my aid !" She slipped into the envelope a little faded flower that she had kept between two leaves of her *Molière* : it was a white violet from Fontainebleau. Unfortunately, the man who delivered the note to Gorgeon was dressed in Prince Vasilikof's livery. The actor thought that she only wrote to him out of bravado, and he burnt all her protestations of love without reading them.

That evening, at seven o'clock, Pauline allowed herself to be dressed like some one dead. She vaguely hoped that the prince would have compassion on her, and that he would not honour her with his company ; but on alighting from her carriage, at the entrance to the theatre, she saw him hasten up eager and radiant. She followed him tremblingly into her box, which was on a level with the footlights, and threw herself into an arm-chair, without noticing that all eyes were fixed upon her. The theatre was crammed. When the curtain was raised Pauline was seized with a sudden giddiness. She saw before her a gulf of fire, and to save herself from falling into it she held on to the front of the box with all her might. Gorgeon had courageously prepared himself for all. He had disguised his paleness with a thick layer of rouge, but he had forgotten to colour his lips : they became livid. He was sufficiently master of himself, however, to retain his memory, and he played his part to the end. The applause was deafening. The audience of the Michael-theatre consists of two distinct elements : the Russian aristocracy, who understand French, and the French colony. There are more than six thousand Frenchmen in St. Peters-

Burg and, one and all, be they tutors, shopkeepers, hairdressers, or cooks, are passionately fond of theatres. The Russians admired Vasilikof's coup-d'état, and even those who had laughed at his caricature two months previously were now all for him. The French idolized Gorgeon, and they showered applause upon him. The Russians replied with ironical cheers, and constantly clapping their hands inopportunely. After the fall of the curtain they called for him so vociferously that he was obliged to come on again. Pauline was more dead than alive.

The following evening, *Le Misanthrope et l'Auvergnat* was performed. Gorgeon was really splendid in the part of Mâchavoine. Brasseur never played the part better. The French had brought wreaths for their favourite; the Russians threw him ludicrous ones. A wag cried out: "Remember me to madame!" He wept with rage on regaining his dressing-room. He found there a letter from Pauline, a letter wet with her tears. He trampled it under foot, tore it into a thousand pieces, and threw it into the fire. After these two fearful evenings, Pauline, frightened by her husband's silence, entreated the prince to let her off the rest. Was not Gorgeon sufficiently punished? Was not Vasilikof sufficiently avenged? The prince was inclined to be merciful: he remitted half Gorgeon's sentence, and decided that after the fourth performance Pauline should be at liberty. "We must be even," said he; "Gorgeon caricatured me eight times in a fortnight; but nights like these count double. After the fourth, honour will be satisfied."

For the next two nights a merry vaudeville, by Messrs. Xavier & V. A., entitled, *La Colère d'Achille*, was announced. It was a most appropriate piece. Achille Pangolin is a modern Sganarelle, who fancies he finds everywhere proofs of his imaginary disgrace. To him, everything is suspicious, from the mewing of his cat to the cries of his parrot. If he finds a walking-stick in his house, he thinks it has been forgotten by some rival, and he breaks it to pieces.

Before he discovers it is his own. He forgets his hat in his wife's room; he returns there, finds it, seizes it, and smashes it: he seeks in every corner for the owner of the unlucky hat. In the excess of his despair, he wants to put an end to his life, and he loads a pistol wherewith to blow his brains out. But a scruple stays his hand. He wishes to destroy himself, but not to suffer: death attracts him, and pain frightens him. To conciliate his horror of life and his love of self, he stands before a looking-glass and shoots himself in effigy.

La Colère d'Achille met with an uproarious success at the Michael theatre. All the points took! Two hours before the performance, Gorgeon had refused to receive a visit from his wife. He played the enraged husband in a most natural manner. Unfortunately, the property pistol was an old relic, and it missed fire. An occupant of the stalls exclaimed in bad French, "How unlucky!" After the performance, as the manager was apologising, Gorgeon said: "It does not signify. I have a pistol at home, I will bring it to-morrow." The next day he brought a handsome double-barrelled pistol. "You see," said he to the manager, "if the first shot misses, I have the second to fall back upon." He acted with a spirit that was hitherto unknown in him. In the last scene, instead of aiming at the looking-glass, he turned the pistol towards his wife and shot her dead. He then blew out his own brains. The performance was stopped. This affair created a great sensation in Petersburg. It was Prince Vasilikof who told the story to me. "Would you believe," said he, in conclusion, "that Gorgeon and Pauline married for love? It is the way of you Parisians."





